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COMMODORE

OLIVER H. PERRY, U.S.N.

London. Published by R. Bentley, 1839.

THE

HISTORY OF THE NAVY

OF

THE UNITED STATES

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OF AMERICA.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE PILOT," "THE RED ROVER," "THE WATER WITCH," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1839.

353.7
C80/HIS
27206

LONDON:

T. BRETTELL, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

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NAVAL HISTORY

OF

THE UNITED STATES

OF

NORTH AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

Addition of light cruisers to the American navy—Vessels selected to carry on the war against Tripoli—Incidents of that war—Settlement of the difficulties with Morocco—Commodore Preble.

THE government soon became aware of the necessity of possessing some light cruisers, which are to a marine, what the eyes and nerves are to the physical formation of man. Without vessels of this character, a commander could never conduct a vigorous blockade, like that required before Tripoli, in particular; and a law passed, February 1803,

authorising the construction of two brigs and two schooners. In the course of the spring of that year, these vessels were built, and the navy received an addition to its list, of the Argus, 16; Siren, 16; Nautilus, 12; and Vixen, 12. The two former were beautiful and very efficient brigs, mounting 16 twenty-four pound carronades, and 2 long twelves; and the two latter were schooners, carrying 12 eighteen-pound carronades, and 2 light long guns each. They were all finely modelled, and serviceable vessels of their size, and are now intimately associated with the early traditions of the navy. There was a singular conformity in their fates, also, the whole four in the end, falling into the hands of their enemies.

When Commodore Morris was recalled, the necessity of sending out a new squadron was foreseen, the times of the crews belonging to the ships left under the orders of Commodore Rodgers being so nearly up. Indeed the latter officer, when he hoisted his broad pennant, was notified that a successor must necessarily soon arrive. The new squadron was so differently organized from the two which had preceded it, as to leave little doubt that the administration had discovered the error which had been made in sending so many light frigates on this service; vessels that were nearly useless in a bombardment, while they could not command the shores, and that had no other quality particularly suited to the warfare in which they were engaged, than a fitness

to convoy. For the latter employment, even the same force distributed in twice the number of vessels, would have been much more efficient and safe.

The vessels now selected to carry on the war against Tripoli, were of an entirely different description. They consisted of the Constitution, 44; Philadelphia, 38; Argus, 16; Siren, 16; Nautilus, 12; Vixen, 12; and Enterprise, 12. The latter was already on the station, and it was intended to keep her there, by sending out men to supply the places of those who declined to enter anew. As usual, these ships sailed as they were ready; the Nautilus, 12, Lieutenant Commodore Somers, being the first that got to sea. This schooner reached Gibraltar on the 27th of July, 1803. She was soon followed by the Philadelphia, 38, Captain Bainbridge, which anchored at the same place, August the 24th. The Constitution, 44, bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Preble, who had been chosen to command the squadron, arrived September 12th; the Vixen, 12, Lieutenant Commodore Smith, September 14th; the Siren, 16, Lieutenant Commodore Stewart, October 1st; and the Argus, 16, Lieutenant Commodore Decatur, November 1st. When the last fell in with the Enterprise, Mr. Decatur took command of that schooner, giving up the brig, by arrangement, to Mr. Hull, who was his senior officer.

The Philadelphia barely touched at Gibraltar, but, hearing that two Tripolitans were cruising off Cape

de Gatt, Captain Bainbridge proceeded, without delay, in quest of them. On the night of the 26th of August, blowing fresh, two sail were made from the Philadelphia, under Cape de Gatt; the largest of which, a ship, was carrying nothing but a fore course. On running alongside this vessel, and hailing, with a good deal of difficulty Captain Bainbridge learned that the stranger was a Barbary cruiser. Further examination discovered that this vessel belonged to the Emperor of Morocco, and that she was the Meshboha, 22, commanded by Ibrahim Lubarez, and had a crew of one hundred and twenty men.

The Moors were made to believe that the Philadelphia was an English frigate, and they admitted that the brig in company was an American. The suspicions of Captain Bainbridge were now awakened, for he could not well account for the brig's being under so little sail, and he sent Mr. Porter, his first lieutenant, on board the Moor, to ascertain if there were any prisoners in his ship. When the boat, with the ordinary unarmed crew, reached the Meshboha, the Moors refused to let the officer come over the side. Captain Bainbridge now directed an armed force to go into the boat, when Mr. Porter succeeded in executing his orders, without further opposition.

Below deck, the boarding officer found the master and crew of the brig in company, which was ascertained to be the Cecilia of Boston, a prize to the

Meshboha. The brig had been captured near Malaga, nine days before; and there was no doubt that the Moors were waiting for other vessels, Cape de Gatt being a head-land commonly made by every thing that keeps the north shore of the Mediterranean aboard.

Captain Bainbridge, on receiving this intelligence, did not hesitate about taking possession of the Meshboha. Her people could not all be removed until near day-light; and during the time that was occupied in transferring them to the frigate, the brig had disappeared. On the afternoon of the 27th, however, she was seen doubling the cape, coming from the eastward, and hugging the land, while she steered in the direction of Almeria, probably with the hope of getting to the westward of the ships, in order to run to Tangiers. Owing to light winds, it was midnight before she could be re-taken. The Cecilia was then given up to her proper master, and she proceeded on her voyage.

It was now all-important to discover on what authority this capture had been made. The Moorish commander, at first, stated that he had taken the Cecilia, in anticipation of a war, a serious misunderstanding existing between the Emperor and the American consul when he left port. This story seemed so improbable that it was not believed, and Captain Bainbridge could only get at the truth by threatening to execute his prisoner as a pirate, unless he showed his commission. This menace

prevailed, and Ibraham Lubarez presented an order from the Governor of Tangiers, to capture all Americans he might fall in with.

The Philadelphia returned to Gibraltar with her prize, and leaving the latter, she went off Cape St. Vincent, in quest of a Moorish frigate that was said to be cruising there. Finding the report false, Captain Bainbridge ran through the straits again, and went aloft, it being understood that the ships employed above, would be coming down about this time.

Shortly after the Philadelphia had gone to her station off Tripoli, the New York, 36, Commodore Rodgers, and the John Adams, 28, Captain Campbell, reached Gibraltar, in the expectation of meeting the new flag-ship. In a day or two the Constitution came in, as did the Nautilus, which had been giving convoy up the Mediterranean. As soon as Commodore Preble was apprised of the facts connected with the capture of the Meshboha, he saw the necessity of disposing of the question with Morocco, before he left the entrance of the Mediterranean open, by going off Tripoli. Commodore Rodgers was the senior officer, and his authority in those seas had properly ceased, but, in the handsomest manner, he consented to accompany Commodore Preble to Tangiers, leaving the latter his power to act, as negociator and commander-in-chief. Accordingly the Constitution, 44; New York, 36; John Adams, 28; and Nautilus, 12; went into the

Bay of Tangiers, October the 6th, 1803. Commodore Preble, on this occasion, discovered that promptitude, spirit, and discretion, which were afterwards so conspicuous in his character; and after a short negociation, the relations of the two countries were placed on their former amicable footing. The commodore had an interview with the Emperor, which terminated in the happiest results. On the part of Morocco, the act of the Governor of Tangiers was disavowed; an American vessel that had been detained at Mogadore, was released; and the Emperor affixed his seal anew to the treaty of 1786. The Commodore then gave up the Meshboha, and it was also agreed to return the Meshouda, the ship taken by the John Adams in 1803. Congress, in the end, however, appropriated an equivalent to the captors of these two vessels, in lieu of prize-money.

As soon as the difficulties with Morocco were settled, Commodore Rodgers sailed for America; and Commodore Preble devoted himself with energy and prudence in making his preparations to bring Tripoli to terms. The latter had an arduous task before him; and its difficulties were increased by the circumstance, that he was personally known to scarcely an officer under his command. During the war with France, the ships had been principally officered from the states in which they had been built, and Captain Preble, a citizen of New Hampshire, had hitherto commanded vessels under these circumstances. He had sailed for the East Indies

in 1800, in the Essex 32, and had been much removed from the rest of the navy, in the course of his service. By one of those accidents that so often influence the affairs of life, all the commanders placed under the orders of Commodore Preble, with the exception of Mr. Hull, came from the middle or the southern states; and it is believed that most of them had never even seen their present commander, until they went in person to report themselves and their vessels. This was not only true of the commanders, but a large portion of the subordinate officers, also, were in the same situation; even most of those in the Constitution herself, having been personally strangers to the commander of the squadron*. The period was now approaching when

* Commodore Preble was a man of high temper, and a rigid disciplinarian. At first he was disliked in his own ship; the younger officers, in particular, feeling the effects of his discipline without having yet learned to respect the high professional qualities for which he afterwards became so distinguished. One night while the Constitution was in the straits of Gibraltar, she suddenly found herself alongside a large ship. Some hailing passed, without either party's giving an answer. Commodore Preble, who had taken the trumpet himself, now told the name and country of his ship, and his own rank. He then *demanded* the name of the stranger, adding, that he would fire a shot, unless answered. "If you fire a shot, I'll return a broadside," was the reply. Preble sprang into his mizen-rigging, applied the trumpet, and said, "this is the United States' ship, Constitution, a 44, Commodore Edward Preble; I am about to hail you for the last time; if not answered, I shall fire into you.—What ship is that?"

the force about to be employed before Tripoli, was to assemble, however, and a service was in perspective that promised to let the whole squadron into the secret of its commander's true character. Previously to relating the events that had then occurred, it will be necessary to return to the movements of the Philadelphia, 38, Captain Bainbridge.

"This is His Britannic Majesty's ship, Donnegal, a razee of 60 guns." Preble told the stranger he doubted his statement, and should lie by him until morning, in order to ascertain his real character. He was as good as his word, and in a short time a boat came from the other vessel to explain. It was an English frigate, and the Constitution had got so suddenly and unexpectedly alongside of her, that the hesitation about answering, and the fictitious name, had proceeded from a desire to gain time, in order to clear the ship to get to quarters. The spirit of Commodore Preble, on this occasion, produced a very favourable impression in his own ship; the young men pithily remarking, that if he were wrong in his temper, he was right in his heart.

CHAPTER II.

Blockade of Tripoli—Capture of the Philadelphia—Interview of the prisoners with the Bashaw—Mr. Nissen, the Danish Consul—The Philadelphia extricated from the reef on which she had struck—Recapture and destruction of the Philadelphia—Intrepid conduct of Mr. Decatur.

It has been seen that the Philadelphia captured the Meshboha, on the night of the 26th of August, 1803. The return to Gibraltar, the run off Cape Vincent, and the passage up the Mediterranean, brought it late in the season before that ship could reach her station. Here the Vixen, 12, Lieutenant Commodore Smith, which schooner had arrived at Gibraltar about the middle of September, appeared also, and the blockade was resumed by these two vessels, the Enterprise having gone below. Unfortunately, soon after his arrival, Captain Bainbridge sent the schooner in quest of a Tripolitan cruiser, that he learned from the master of a neutral, had got to sea a short time previously. This left the frigate alone, to perform a very delicate service, the blockading vessels being constantly compelled to chase in-shore.

Towards the last of the month of October, the

wind, which had been strong from the westward for some time previously, drove the Philadelphia a considerable distance to the eastward of the town, and on Monday, October the 31st, as she was running down to her station again, with a fair breeze, about nine in the morning, a vessel was seen inshore and to windward, standing for Tripoli. Sail was made to cut her off. Believing himself to be within long gun shot a little before eleven, and seeing no other chance of overtaking the stranger in the distance that remained, Captain Bainbridge opened a fire, in the hope of cutting something away. For near an hour longer, the chase and the fire were continued; the lead, which was constantly kept going, giving from seven to ten fathoms, and the ship hauling up and keeping away, as the water shoaled or deepened. At half-past eleven, Tripoli then being in plain sight, distant a little more than a league, satisfied that he could neither overtake the chase, nor force her ashore, Captain Bainbridge ordered the helm a-port, to haul directly off the land into deep water. The next cast of the lead, when this order was executed, gave but eight fathoms, and this was immediately followed by casts that gave seven, and six and a-half. At this moment, the wind was nearly a-beam, and the ship had eight knots way on her. When the cry of "half-six" was heard, the helm was put hard down, and the yards were ordered to be braced sharp up. While the ship was coming up fast to the wind, and before she had lost any of

her way, she struck a reef forwards, and shot up on it, until she lifted between five and six feet.

This was an appalling accident to occur on the coast of such an enemy, at that season of the year, and with no other cruiser near! It was first attempted to force the vessel ahead, under the impression that the best water was to seaward; but on sounding around the ship, it was found that she had run up with such force, as to lie nearly cradled on the rocks, there being only 14 feet of water under the fore-chains, while the ship drew, before striking, 18½ feet forward. Astern there were not 18 feet of water, instead of 20½, which the frigate needed. Such an accident could only have occurred by the vessel's hitting the reef at a spot where it sloped gradually, and where, most probably, the constant washing of the element had rendered the surface smooth; and by her going up, on top of one of those long, heavy, but nearly imperceptible swells, that are always agitating the bosom of the ocean.

The vessel of which the Philadelphia had been in chase was a large xebeck, and her commander, acquainted with the coast, stood on, inside of the reef, doubled the edge of the shoal, and reached Tripoli in safety. The firing, however, had brought out nine gun-boats, which now appeared, turning to windward. Not a moment was to be lost, as it would shortly be in the power of these vessels to assail the frigate, almost with impunity. Finding, on further examination, deep water astern, the yards were next braced

aback, and the guns were run aft, in the equally vain hope of forcing the ship astern, or to make her slide off the sloping rocks on which she had run so hard. It was some time, before this project was abandoned, as it was the most practicable means of getting afloat.

On a consultation with his officers, Captain Bainbridge next gave orders to throw overboard all the guns, after reserving a few aft, that were retained for defence; and the anchors, with the exception of the larboard bower, were cut from the bows. Before this could be effected the enemy came within gunshot, and opened his fire. Fortunately, the Tripolitans were ignorant of the desperate condition of the Philadelphia, and were kept at a respectful distance, by the few guns that remained; else they might have destroyed most of the crew, it being certain that the colours would not be struck, so long as there was any hope of getting the ship afloat. The cannonade, which was distant and inefficient, and the business of lightening the frigate went on at the same time, and occupied several hours.

The enemy finally became so bold, that they crossed the stern of the frigate, where alone they were at all exposed to her fire, and took a position on her starboard, or weather quarter. Here it was impossible to touch them, the ship having sewed to port, in a way to render it impracticable to bring a single gun to bear, or, indeed, to use one at all, on that side.

Captain Bainbridge now called another counsel of his officers, and it was determined to make a last effort to get the vessel off. The water casks in the hold were started, and the water was pumped out. All the heavy articles that could be got at were thrown overboard, and finally the fore-mast was cut away, bringing down with it the main-top-gallant-mast. Notwithstanding all this, the vessel remained as immovable as the rocks on which she lay.

The gun-boats were growing bolder every minute, others were approaching, and night was at hand. Captain Bainbridge, after consulting again, with his officers, felt it to be an imperious duty to haul down his flag, to save the lives of the people. Before this was done, however, the magazine was drowned, holes were bored in the ship's bottom, the pumps were choaked, and every thing was performed that it was thought would make sure of the final loss of the vessel. About five o'clock the colours were lowered.

It is a curious circumstance, that this was the second instance in which an American vessel of war had been compelled to haul down her flag, since the formation of the new marine, and that in each case the same officer commanded. After the accounts given in this work, it is unnecessary to add, that on both occasions an imperious necessity produced this singular coincidence.

The ship had no sooner struck than the gun-boats ran down alongside of her, and took possession.

The barbarians rushed into the vessel, and began to plunder their captives. Not only were the clothes which the Americans had collected in their bags and in bundles, taken from them, but many officers and men were stripped half naked. They were hurried into boats, and sent to Tripoli, and even on the passage the business of plundering went on. The officers were respected little more than the common men, and, while in the boat, Captain Bainbridge himself, was robbed of his epaulets, gloves, watch, and money. His cravat was even torn from his neck. He wore a miniature of his wife, and of this the Tripolitans endeavoured to deprive him also, but, a youthful and attached husband, he resisted so seriously, that the attempt was relinquished.

It was near 10 o'clock at night, when the boats reached the town. The prisoners were landed in a body, near the bashaw's palace, and they were conducted to his presence. The prince received his captives in an audience hall, seated in a chair of state, and surrounded by his ministers. Here Captain Bainbridge was formally presented to him, as his prisoner, when the bashaw himself, directed all the officers to be seated. The minister of foreign affairs, Mohammed D'Ghies, spoke French, and through him the bashaw held a conversation of some length with Captain Bainbridge. The latter was asked many questions concerning the Philadelphia, the force of the Americans in the Mediterranean, and he was civilly consoled for his captivity,

by being reminded that it was merely the fortune of war.

When the conversation had ended, the officers were conducted to another apartment, where a supper had been provided, and as soon as this meal had been taken by those who had the hearts to eat, they were led back to the audience hall, and paid their parting compliments to the bashaw. Here the captives were informed that they were put under the special charge of Sidi Mohammed D'Ghies, who conducted them to the house that had lately been the American consulate. The building was spacious and commodious, but almost destitute of furniture. It was one o'clock in the morning, but at that late hour even, appeared Mr. Nissen, the Danish consul, bringing with him the consolations of sympathy and hope. This benevolent man was introduced to Captain Bainbridge, by Mohammed D'Ghies, as his personal friend, and as one on whose honour, humanity, and good faith, full reliance might be placed. Mahommed D'Ghies, himself, was known by reputation to Captain Bainbridge, and he had shown delicacy and feeling in the exercise of his trust. His recommendation, which was pointedly significant, coupled with the manner of Mr. Nissen, excited a confidence that in the end proved to be the most worthily bestowed. Every thing that could be devised, at that unseasonable hour, was done by Mr. Nissen. This was but the commencement of a series of indefatigable and unwearying kindness that

endured to the last moment of the captivity of the Americans.

The misfortune that befell the Philadelphia, made a material difference in the state of the war. Until this moment, the bashaw had received but little to compensate him for the inconvenience to which he was put by the blockade, and for the loss of his different cruisers. His corsairs had captured but very few merchant vessels, and they ran the greatest risks, whenever they appeared out of their own ports. As yet, it is true, nothing had been attempted against his town, but he knew it was at any time liable to a vigorous bombardment. It was thought, therefore, that he was not indisposed to peace, when accident threw the crew of the Philadelphia into his power.

The bashaw, however, had now a hold upon his enemy, that, agreeably to the usages of Barbary, enabled him to take much higher ground, in proposing his terms. In his previous negociations, he had asked a large sum as the price of the few captives he then held, but the terms had been rejected as unreasonable and exorbitant. On board the Philadelphia were three hundred and fifteen souls, and among them were no less than twenty-two quarter-deck officers*, gentlemen in whose

* William Bainbridge, captain; David Porter, first-lieutenant; Jacob Jones, second ditto; Theodore Hunt, third ditto; Benjamin Smith, fourth ditto; William Osborn, lieutenant of marines; John Ridgely, surgeon; J. Cowdery, ditto, mate; Nicholas Harwood,

fortunes the bashaw well knew there would be a lively interest felt, to say nothing of the concern that a government like that of America was expected to manifest for the fate of its seamen. Under these circumstances, therefore, the divan of Tripoli felt strongly encouraged, by the capture it had made, to continue the war, in the hope of receiving a high ransom for the prisoners, and in the expectation of holding a check on the measures of its enemy, by its means of retaliation.

The Philadelphia ran on the reef on the 31st of October, and her people were landed during the night of the same day. The Tripolitans set about their arrangements to get the ship off, next morning, and as they were near their own port, had so many gun-boats and galleys at their disposal, and were unmolested by any cruiser, it was soon announced to the bashaw that there were hopes of saving the frigate. In the course of the 2nd of November, it came on to blow fresh from the north-west, and the wind forcing the water up on the African coast, while it bore on the larboard quarter of the ship,

ditto, ditto; Keith Spence, purser; and Bernard Henry, James Gibbon, Benjamin Franklin Reed, James Renshaw, Wallace Wormley, Robert Gamble, James Biddle, Richard R. Jones, Daniel T. Patterson, Simon Smith, and William Cutbush, midshipmen; William Adams, captain's clerk. Of these gentlemen, Messrs. J. Jones, Renshaw, Biddle, and Patterson, are still in service, and have all worn broad pennants. Dr. Cowdery is the oldest surgeon now in the navy.

her stern was driven round, and she floated, in part, though she continued to thump, as the seas left her. Anchors were now carried out, all the disposable force of the town was applied, and on the 5th, the Philadelphia was got into deep water. The same day, she was brought within two miles of the city, where she was compelled to anchor, on account of the state of the weather. Here she was kept afloat by means of pumping, while men were employed in stopping the leaks. The business of scuttling appears to have been but imperfectly performed, a few holes having been merely bored in the bottom of the ship, instead of cutting through the planks, as had been ordered. The weather continuing remarkably fine, the Turks finally succeeded in not only getting the ship into port, but in weighing all her guns and anchors, which lay in shallow water on the reef, as well as in getting up nearly every thing else that had been thrown overboard. The ship was partially repaired, her guns were remounted, and she was moored off the town, about a quarter of a mile from the bashaw's castle.

Leaving Captain Bainbridge and his fellow sufferers to endure the privations and hardships of a captivity in Barbary, it is now necessary to return to the other vessels of the American squadron, to do which we must go back a few days in the order of time.

Commodore Preble, on his return from Tangiers to Gibraltar, on the 15th of October, went round to

Cadiz; soon after, he re-appeared at the former place, made a formal announcement of the blockade of Tripoli, on the 12th of November, on which day, the ship he believed to be in the active execution of that duty, was in the possession of the enemy, and on the 13th, he sailed for Algiers. After landing a consul at the latter place, he proceeded to Malta, off which port he arrived on the 27th of November. Here he was met by letters from Captain Bainbridge, and he obtained a confirmation of the loss of the Philadelphia, a rumour of which event had reached him lower down on the coast. The Constitution sailed immediately for Syracuse, and got in next day.

On the 17th of December, 1803, Commodore Preble, after making his preparations and disposing of his force in different ways, sailed for Tripoli, with the Enterprise in company, off which place he now appeared for the first time. The 23rd of the month, the Enterprise, 12, Lieutenant Commandant Decatur, fell in with and captured a ketch, called the Mastico, with seventy souls on board. The Mastico had been a French gun-vessel in Egypt, that had been taken by the English, and had passed into the hands of the Tripolitans. She was now bound to Constantinople, with a present of female slaves for the Porte. A few days after this prize was taken, it came on to blow heavily from the north-east, and finding the frigate in danger of being lost on the coast, at that tempestuous season, Commodore Preble returned to Syracuse; not, however,

until he had reconnoitred his enemy, and formed his plan of operations for the future. Means had been found to communicate with Captain Bainbridge, also, and several letters were received from that officer, pointing out different methods of annoying the enemy.

In a letter of the date of the 5th of December, 1803, Captain Bainbridge suggested the possibility of destroying the Philadelphia, which ship was slowly fitting for sea, there being little doubt of her being sent out as a cruiser, as soon as the mild season should arrive. Commodore Preble listened to this suggestion, and being much in the society of the commander of the vessel that was most in company with the Constitution, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, he mentioned the project to that spirited officer. The expedition was just suited to the ardour and temperament of Mr. Decatur, and the possession of the Mastico, at once afforded the means of carrying it into effect. The ketch was accordingly appraised, named the Intrepid, and taken into the service, as a tender. About this time, Lieutenant-Commandant Stewart, of the Siren, the officer who was then second in command in the Mediterranean, and who had just arrived from below, offered to cut out the Philadelphia with his own brig; but Commodore Preble was pledged to Mr. Decatur, who, at first, had proposed to run in with the Enterprise and carry the ship. The more experienced Preble rejected the propositions of both

these ardent young men, substituting a plan of his own.

Although Commodore Preble declined the proposal of Mr. Decatur, to carry in the Enterprise, the projected service was assigned to the commander and crew of that schooner. It being necessary, however, to leave a few of her own officers and people in her, a selection of a few gentlemen to join the expedition, was made from the flag ship, and orders to that effect were issued accordingly. These orders were dated February the 3rd, 1804, and they directed the different gentlemen named, to report themselves to Lieutenant Commander Decatur, of the Enterprise. As it was intended that the crew of the schooner should furnish the entire crew of the ketch, it was not thought proper to add any men to this draft. In short, the duty was strictly assigned to the Enterprise, so far as her complement could furnish the officers required. On the afternoon of the 3rd, according to the orders they had just received, Messrs. Izard, Morris, Laws, Davis, and Rowe, all midshipmen of the Constitution, went on board the schooner, and reported themselves for duty to her commander. All hands were now called in the Enterprise, when Lieutenant Commander Decatur acquainted his people with the destination of the ketch, and asked for volunteers. Every man and boy in the schooner presented himself, as ready and willing to go. Sixty-two of the most active men were selected, and the re-

mainder, with a few officers, were left to take care of the vessel. As the orders to destroy the frigate, and not to attempt to bring her out, were peremptory, the combustibles, which had been prepared for this purpose, were immediately sent on board the Intrepid; her crew followed, and that evening the ketch sailed, under the convoy of the Siren, 16, Lieutenant Commander Stewart, who was properly the senior officer of the expedition, though, owing to the peculiar nature of the service, Mr. Decatur was permitted to conduct the more active part of the duty, at his own discretion.

The party in the ketch consisted of Lieutenant Commander Decatur; Lieutenants Lawrence, Bainbridge, and Thorn; Mr. Thomas M'Donough, midshipman, and Dr. Heerman, surgeon; all of the Enterprise:—Messrs. Izard, Morris, Laws, Davis, and Rowe, midshipmen, of the Constitution; and Salvador Catalano, the pilot, with 62 petty officers and common men, making a total of 74 souls.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the accommodations were none of the best, with so many persons cooped up in a vessel of between forty and fifty tons; and to make the matter worse, it was soon found that the salted meat put on board was spoiled, and that there was little besides bread and water left to subsist on. The weather, however, was pleasant, and the wind favourable, and the two vessels got in sight of Tripoli on the afternoon of the 9th. To prevent suspicions, the Intrepid now went ahead of

the Siren; and a little after dark, she had stretched in quite near to the coast, with a breeze at south-west, anchoring about a mile to windward of the town. Shortly after, the Siren disguised, brought-to a little to seaward of her. The night came on dark and threatening, but it was in some respects so favourable to the enterprise, that Mr. Decatur was reluctant to let it pass without making the attempt. The weather underwent a sudden change, as is common on that coast, and for a short time it was doubtful what was proper to be done. The pilot, however, pronounced it extremely hazardous to venture in among the rocks at that moment, as he thought the sea must be breaking across the entrance, by which it was proposed to pass. Under the circumstances, Mr. Decatur, who displayed as much conduct and prudence as daring gallantry throughout this whole affair, sent Mr. Morris and the pilot, in a boat with muffled oars, to reconnoitre. This young officer pulled close up to the western passage, and ascertained that the sea was so high that it was, in fact, breaking entirely across the entrance; when he returned and reported that it would be hazardous to go in, and that to come out would be impossible.

The report was scarcely needed, for by this time the wind had risen so high, and so much sea had got up, that in hoisting in the boat, it was stove; and when the anchor was weighed, for it was necessary to get off the land as soon as possible, it was found to be broken. The Siren had anchored a little with-

out the ketch, and had hoisted out and armed her boats, which were to cover the retreat, but she, too, was compelled to get under way, by the increasing violence of the wind. Several hours were employed in a vain attempt to get her anchor, the brig rolling gunwales-to, and a good many of her people, together with Lieutenant Commandant Stewart, were hurt by the capstan's running away with the bars. In the end, the weather came on so bad, and the danger of being seen as the day dawned was so much increased, that the anchor and cable were left, the latter having been cut without the hawse-holes.

So sudden and violent was the gale, that there had been no communication between the two vessels, the Siren having no other intimation of the departure of the ketch, than by seeing her light, as she stretched out to sea. Luckily, the wind was well to the westward, and both vessels got an offing before they were seen from Tripoli. Here they lay to, with their heads off shore, certain of being far enough to leeward, to be out of sight in the morning. The wind began to haul to the northward, and the gale lasted six days, during which time great fears were entertained of the ketch's foundering at sea, or of her being, at least, driven on the coast, the change in the wind having brought the vessels on a lee shore. Before the wind abated, they were driven up into the gulf of Sydra, where they were fairly embayed.

On the 15th the weather moderated, and the brig and ketch, which had kept in company, notwith-

standing the gale, endeavoured to fetch in with the land, and in the course of the night they got so near, as to reconnoitre and ascertain their position. Finding themselves too far to the eastward to effect any thing that night, they hauled off again, in order to escape detection. The next day, about noon, calculating that they were abreast of the town, and the wind and weather being in all respects favourable, both vessels kept away, the ketch leading some distance, in order that the enemy might not suppose her a consort of the Siren's, although the latter was so much disguised, as to render it impossible to recognise her. The wind was fair, but light; and every thing looking favourable, Mr. Decatur now seriously made his dispositions for the attack. Apprehensive that they might have been seen, and that the enemy had possibly strengthened the party on board the frigate, Lieutenant Commander Stewart sent a boat and eight men from the Siren to the ketch, under the orders of one of his midshipmen, Mr. Anderson which reinforcement increased the numbers of the intended assailants to eighty-two, all told.

The orders of Lieutenant Commander Decatur were clear and simple. The spar-deck was first to be carried, and then the gun-deck, after which the following distribution of the party was made, in order to set fire to the ship. Mr. Decatur with Messrs. Izard and Rowe, and fifteen men, were to keep possession of the upper deck; Mr. Lawrence with Messrs. Laws and M'Donough, and ten men, were

to repair to the birth-deck and forward store-rooms; Mr. Bainbridge, with Mr. Davis and ten men were to go into the ward-room and steerage; Mr. Morris, with eight men, was to go into the cockpit and after store rooms; Mr. Thorn, with the gunner, surgeon, and thirteen men, were to look after the ketch; to Mr. Izard was assigned the command of the launch, should she be needed; and Mr. Anderson, with the Siren's cutter, was to secure all boats alongside of the ship, and to prevent the people from swimming ashore, with directions, however, to board as soon as the first duty was performed.

Fire arms were to be used only in the last extremity, and the first object of every one was to clear the upper-deck and gun-deck of the enemy. These arrangements were plain and judicious. The watch word was " Philadelphia."

As the ketch drew in with the land, the ship became visible. She lay not quite a mile within the entrance, riding to the wind, and abreast of the town. Her fore-mast, which had been cut away while she was on the reef, had not yet been replaced, her main and mizen-top masts were housed, and her lower yards were on the gunwales. Her lower standing rigging, however, was in its place, and, as was shortly afterwards ascertained, her guns were loaded and shotted. Just within her, lay two corsairs, with a few gun-boats, and a galley.

It was a mild evening for the season, and the sea and bay were smooth as in summer; as unlike

as possible to the same place a few days previously, when the two vessels had been driven from the enterprise by a tempest. Perceiving that he was likely to get in too soon, when about five miles from the rocks, Mr. Decatur ordered buckets and other drags to be towed astern, in order to lessen the way of the ketch, without shortening sail, as the latter expedient would have been seen from the port, and must have awakened suspicion. In the mean time the wind gradually fell, until it became so light as to leave the ketch but about two knots' way on her, when the drags were removed.

About ten o'clock the Intrepid reached the eastern entrance of the bay, or the passage between the rocks and the shoal. The wind was nearly east, and as she steered directly for the frigate, it was well abaft the beam. There was a young moon; and as these bold adventurers were slowly advancing into a hostile port, all around them was tranquil, and apparently without distrust. For near an hour they were stealing slowly along, the air gradually failing, until their motion became scarcely perceptible.

Most of the officers and men of the ketch had been ordered to lie on the deck, where they were concealed by low bulwarks, or weather-boards, and by the different objects that belong to a vessel. As it is the practice of those seas to carry a number of men even in the smallest craft, the appearace of ten or twelve would excite no alarm, and this number was visible. The commanding officer himself stood

near the pilot, Mr. Cartalano*, who was to act as interpreter.

The quarter-master at the helm, was ordered to stand directly for the frigate's bows, it being the intention to lay the ship aboard in that place, as the mode of attack which would least expose the assailants to her fire.

The Intrepid was still at a considerable distance from the Philadelphia, when the latter hailed. The pilot answered that the ketch belonged to Malta, and was on a trading voyage; that she had been nearly wrecked, and had lost her anchors in the late gale, and that her commander wished to ride by the frigate during the night. This conversation lasted some time, Mr. Decatur instructing the pilot to tell the frigate's people with what he was laden, in order to amuse them, and the Intrepid gradually drew nearer, until there was every prospect of her running foul of the Philadelphia, in a minute or two, and at the very spot contemplated. But the wind suddenly shifted, and took the ketch a-back. The instant the southerly puff struck her, her head fell off, and she got a stern-board, the ship, at the same moment, tending to the new current of air. The effect of this unexpected change was to bring the ketch directly under the frigate's broadside, at the distance of about forty yards, where she lay perfectly becalmed, or, if any thing, drifting slowly astern,

* Now a sailing master in the navy.

exposed to nearly every one of the Philadelphia's larboard guns.

Not the smallest suspicion appears to have been yet excited on board the frigate, though several of her people were looking over her rails, and notwithstanding the moonlight. So completely were the Turks deceived, that they lowered a boat, and sent it with a fast. Some of the ketch's men, in the mean time, had got into her boat, and had run a line to the frigate's fore chains. As they returned, they met the frigate's boat, took the fast it brought, which came from the after part of the ship, and passed it into their own vessel. These fasts were put into the hands of the men, as they lay on the ketch's deck, and they began cautiously to breast the Intrepid alongside of the Philadelphia, without rising. As soon as the latter got near enough to the ship, the Turks discovered her anchors, and they sternly ordered the ketch to keep off, as she had deceived them; preparing, at the same time, to cut the fasts. All this passed in a moment, when the cry of "Americanos" was heard in the ship. The people of the Intrepid, by a strong pull, brought their vessel alongside of the frigate, where she was secured quick as thought. Up to this moment, not a whisper had betrayed the presence of the men concealed. The instructions had been positive, to keep quiet until commanded to show themselves, and no precipitation, even in that trying moment, deranged the plan.

Lieutenant Commander Decatur was standing

ready for a spring, with Messrs. Laws and Morris quite near him. As soon as close enough, he jumped at the frigate's chain-plates, and while clinging to the ship himself, he gave the order to board. The two midshipmen were at his side, and all the officers and men of the Intrepid arose and followed. The three gentlemen named were in the chains together, and Lieutenant Commander Decatur and Mr. Morris sprang at the rail above them, while Mr. Laws dashed at a port. To the latter would have belonged the honour of having been first in this gallant assault, but wearing a boarding belt, his pistols were caught between the gun and the side of the port. Mr. Decatur's foot slipped in springing, and Mr. Charles Morris first stood upon the quarter-deck of the Philadelphia. In an instant, Lieutenant Commander Decatur and Mr. Laws were at his side, while heads and bodies appeared coming over the rail, and through the ports, in all directions.

The surprise appears to have been as perfect, as the assault was rapid and earnest. Most of the Turks on deck crowded forward, and all ran over to the starboard-side, as their enemies poured in on the larboard. A few were aft, but as soon as charged, they leaped into the sea. Indeed, the constant plunges into the water, gave the assailants the assurance that their enemies were fast lessening in numbers by flight. It took but a minute or two to clear the spar-deck, though there was more of a struggle below. Still, so admirably managed was

the attack, and so complete the surprise, that the resistance was but trifling. In less than ten minutes Mr. Decatur was on the quarter-deck again, in undisturbed possession of his prize.

There can be no doubt that this gallant officer now felt bitter regrets, that it was not in his power to bring away the ship he had so nobly recovered. Not only were his orders on this point peremptory, however, but the frigate had not a sail bent, nor a yard crossed, and she wanted her foremast. It was next to impossible, therefore, to remove her, and the command was given to pass up the combustibles from the ketch.

The duty of setting fire to the prize, appears to have been executed with as much promptitude and order, as every other part of the service. The officers distributed themselves, agreeably to the previous instructions, and the men soon appeared with the necessary means. Each party acted by itself, and as it got ready. So rapid were they all in their movements, that the men with combustibles had scarcely time to get as low as the cock-pit and after store-rooms, before the fires were lighted over their heads. When the officer entrusted with the duty last mentioned, had got through, he found the afterhatches filled with smoke, from the fire in the wardroom and steerage, and he was obliged to make his escape by the forward ladders.

The Americans were in the ship from twenty to twenty-five minutes, and they were literally driven

out of her by the flames. The vessel had got to be so dry in that low latitude, that she burnt like pine; and the combustibles had been as judiciously prepared, as they were steadily used. The last party up, were the people who had been in the store-rooms, and when they reached the deck, they found most of their companions already in the Intrepid. Joining them, and ascertaining that all was ready, the order was given to cast off. Notwithstanding the daring character of the enterprise in general, Mr. Decatur and his party now ran the greatest risks they had incurred that night. So fierce had the conflagration already become, that the flames began to pour out of the ports, and the head-fast having been cast off, the ketch fell astern, with her jigger flapping against the quarter-gallery, and her boom foul. The fire showed itself in the window, at this critical moment; and beneath, was all the ammunition of the party, covered with a tarpaulin. To increase the risk, the stern-fast was jammed. By using swords, however, for there was not time to look for an axe, the hawser was cut, and the Intrepid was extricated from the most imminent danger, by a vigorous shove. As she swung clear of the frigate, the flames reached the rigging, up which they went hissing, like a rocket, the tar having oozed from the ropes, which had been saturated with that inflammable matter. Matches could not have kindled with greater quickness.

The sweeps were now manned. Up to this

moment, every thing had been done earnestly, though without noise; but as soon as they felt that they had got command of their ketch again, and by two or three vigorous strokes, had sent her away from the frigate, the people of the Intrepid ceased rowing, and as one man, they gave three cheers for victory. This appeared to arouse the Turks from their stupor, for the cry had hardly ended, when the batteries, the two corsairs, and the galley, poured in their fire. The men laid hold of the sweeps again, of which the Intrepid had eight of a side, and favoured by a light air, they went merrily down the harbour.

The spectacle that followed, is described as having been both beautiful and sublime. The entire bay was illuminated by the conflagration, the roar of cannon was constant, and Tripoli was in a clamour. The appearance of the ship was, in the highest degree, magnificent; and to add to the effect, as her guns heated, they began to go off. Owing to the shift of wind, and the position into which she had tended, she, in some measure, returned the enemy's fire, as one of her broadsides was discharged in the direction of the town, and the other towards Fort English. The most singular effect of this conflagration was on board the ship, for the flames having run up the rigging and masts, collected under the tops, and fell over, giving the whole the appearance of glowing columns and fiery capitals.

Under ordinary circumstances, the situation of

the ketch would still have been thought sufficiently perilous, but after the exploit they had just performed, her people, elated with success, regarded all that was now passing, as a triumphant spectacle. The shot constantly cast the spray around them, or were whistling over their heads, but the only sensation they produced, was by calling attention to the brilliant jets d'eau that they occasioned as they bounded along the water. But one struck the Intrepid, although she was within half-a-mile of many of the heaviest guns for some time, and that passed through her top-gallant sail.

With sixteen sweeps, and eighty men elated with success, Mr. Decatur was enabled to drive the little Intrepid a-head with a velocity that rendered towing useless. Near the harbour's mouth, he met the Siren's boats, sent to cover his retreat, but their services were scarcely necessary. As soon as the ketch was out of danger, he got into one, and pulled aboard the brig, to report to Lieutenant Com. Stewart, the result of his undertaking.

The Siren had got into the offing some time after the Intrepid, agreeably to arrangement, and anchored about three miles from the rocks. Here she hoisted out the launch and a cutter, manned and armed them, and sent them in, under Mr. Caldwell, her first lieutenant. Soon after the brig weighed, and the wind having entirely failed outside, she swept into eight fathoms water, and anchored again, to cover

the retreat, should the enemy attempt to board the Intrepid, with his gun-boats. It will readily be supposed that it was an anxious moment, and as the moon rose, all eyes were on the frigate. After waiting in intense expectation near an hour, a rocket went up from the Philadelphia. It was the signal of possession, and Mr. Stewart ran below to get another for the answer. He was gone only a moment, but when he returned, the fire was seen shining through the frigate's ports, and in a few more minutes, the flames were rushing up her rigging, as if a train had been touched. Then followed the cannonade, and the dashing of sweeps, with the approach of the ketch. Presently a boat was seen coming alongside, and a man, in a sailor's jacket, sprang over the gangway of the brig. It was Mr. Decatur, to announce his victory!

The ketch and brig lay near each other for about an hour, when a strong and favourable wind arose, and they made sail for Syracuse, which port they reached on the 19th. Here the party was received with salutes and congratulations, by the Sicilians, who were also at war with Tripoli, as well as by their own countrymen.

The success of this gallant exploit, laid the foundation of the name which Mr. Decatur subsequently acquired in the navy. The country applauded the feat generally; and the commanding officer was raised from the station of a lieutenant to that of a

captain. Most of the midshipmen engaged were also promoted. Lieutenant Com. Decatur also received a sword*.

The Philadelphia was a frigate of the class that the English termed a thirty-eight, previously to the war of 1812. Her armament consisted of 28 eighteens, on her gun deck, and of 16 carronades and chase guns, above; or of 44 guns in the whole. No correct estimate has probably ever been made of the number of men in her, when she was captured. Twenty were reported to have been killed, and one boat loaded with Turks is said to have escaped; many also swam ashore, or to the nearest cruisers. Some, no doubt, secreted themselves below, of whom the greater part must have perished in the ship, as the party that set fire to the after store-rooms had difficulty in escaping from the flames. But one prisoner was made, a wounded Turk, who took refuge in the ketch. On the part of the Americans but a single man was hurt.

In whatever light we regard this exploit, it extorts our admiration and praise; the boldness in the conception of the enterprise, being even surpassed by the perfect manner in which all its parts were

* Notwithstanding his merit, the propriety of making Mr. Decatur a captain was much questioned. When the news reached America, his name was before the senate, under nomination, as the youngest master and commander of eight, but, on receiving the intelligence of his success, it was withdrawn, and sent in for a captain's commission.

executed. Nothing appears to have been wanting, in a military point of view; nothing was deranged; nothing defeated. The hour was well chosen, and no doubt it was a chief reason why the corsairs, gun-boats, and batteries, were, in the first place, so slow in commencing their fire, and so uncertain in their aim, when they did open on the Americans. In appreciating the daring of the attempt, we have only to consider what might have been the consequences had the assault on the frigate been repulsed. Directly under the guns, with a harbour filled with light cruisers, gun-boats, and galleys, and surrounded by forts and batteries, the inevitable destruction of all in the Intrepid must have followed. These were dangers that cool steadiness and entire self-possession, aided by perfect discipline, could alone avert. In the service, the enterprise has ever been regarded as one of its most brilliant achievements, and to this day it is deemed a high honour to have been one of the Intrepid's crew. The effect on the squadron then abroad can scarcely be appreciated, as its seamen began to consider themselves invincible, if not invulnerable, and were ready for any service in which men could be employed.

CHAPTER III.

Importance of exhibiting a formidable force against the Barbary powers—Ships sent into the Mediterranean—Promotion of Mr. Decatur—Capture of the Transfer—Active employment of Commodore Preble—Unsuccessful attempt—Force before Tripoli—Bombardment of the town—Personal encounter between Mr. Decatur and the Captain of a Tripolitan vessel—Death of Mr. James Decatur—Combat between Mr. Trippe and a Tripolitan—Termination of the attack—Its effect on the enemy—Officers who distinguished themselves.

THUS opened the year 1804. The great distance, however, that lay between the seat of war, and the country, as well as the unfrequency of direct communications, prevented the government at home, from getting early information of what was passing in the Mediterranean. As a consequence, at the very moment when Commodore Preble was beginning to show that energy for which he was so remarkable, the department was making preparations for superseding him in the command, not from dissatisfaction, but, as was then believed, from necessity. There were but three captains in the navy junior to Preble, and one of these was a captive in Tripoli. The loss of the Philadelphia had rendered it indispensable to send out another frigate, at least, and the

administration had now begun to take so serious a view of the state of the relations of the country with all the Barbary powers, as to see the importance of exhibiting a force, that should look down any further attempts on a trade, which, in consequence of the general war that prevailed in Europe, was beginning to whiten the seas of the old world with American canvass. The Emperor of Morocco, who was said to be a relative of the Bashaw of Tripoli, was distrusted in particular, and many little occurrences had served to prove the interest that the former felt in the affairs of the latter.

As soon as the president was apprised of the loss of the Philadelphia, therefore, orders had been given to prepare the required additional force. So little, however, had the real government of the country attended to this all important branch of public defence, that it was far easier to command the equipment of a single frigate, than to get her to sea, within a reasonable time. In 1804, the mercantile tonnage of the United States was actually about 1,000,000 tons, and yet the country did not possess a single dock, public or private, between Maine and Georgia. The unmeaning clamour against all improvements of this nature, which had commenced with the existence of the new administration, was still continued, and, as is too often witnessed in the indiscriminate and unprincipled strife of parties, they who professed to be the warmest advocates of an active and growing marine, were the loudest in

declaiming against those very measures, without which no navy can ever be efficient, or even moderately useful. In the actual state of the public mind, the direct method of procuring those indispensable requisites of a marine, dock-yards, was not attempted, but very insufficient substitutes had been obtained by a liberal construction on the law authorising the building of the six seventy-fours, for which purpose, building yards were thought to be necessary. In this manner, as many navy yards, as they were called, for neither had a dock, were purchased, and an humble commencement of these indispensable establishments was made at Gosport, Washington, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Charlestown and Portsmouth, N. H. Thus, in the great interests connected with a navy, as in every thing else in a country that is so eminently practical, and in which few have sufficient leisure to cultivate theories, the facts were still leading opinion, and the gallant men who were slowly fighting themselves into favour, were merely performing an office that would seem to be inseparable from the advancement of every free people in civilization.

The ships that was now decided to send into the Mediterranean, were the President, 44; Congress, 38; Constellation, 38; and Essex, 32. They were put in commission early in the season, and, as soon as the choice was made, Commodore Preble was apprised of it, and of the necessity that existed of sending out two officers who were his seniors in rank. About

the same time, Mr. Decatur was made a captain, for the destruction of the Philadelphia, and the service received an important impulse, in the revival of the rank of masters and commanders, which, it will be remembered, had been dropped altogether, under the reduction law of 1801. At the time the Philadelphia was retaken and burned, there were six lieutenants in the Mediterranean acting as lieutenants-commandant, Messrs. Stewart, Hull, Smith, Somers, Decatur, and Dent, and of these, four were senior to the one just promoted. As Lieutenant Com. Stewart was the second in command in the Mediterranean, as well as the oldest lieutenant of the service, and as he had actually accompanied the expedition in person, aiding with his counsel, and ready to act on an emergency; it was thought that something more ought to have been done for the gentlemen over whose heads Mr. Decatur had been elevated. When raised to be a captain, Mr. Decatur was the eighth officer of his station in the navy, and it would have been more in conformity with the practices of old and well established marines, to have promoted all his seniors, as they were all known to be qualified, and several had already distinguished themselves, even in commands. But it was premature to expect this systematic justice, in a service so young, and which might still be said to be struggling for its existence, and the class of masters and commanders was simply re-established, Messrs. Charles Stewart, Isaac Hull, Andrew Sterrett, John Shaw, Isaac

Chauncey, John Smith, Richard Somers, and George Cox, being the gentlemen who were first appointed to this rank, after it had been renewed in the service. These promotions, which were connected with the establishment of a new rank, were dated in May 1804, although all of the gentlemen concerned, who were abroad, continue to serve in their old capacities, until quite near the close of the season.

The Siren and Intrepid returned to Syracuse, after the successful attempt on the Philadelphia, on the 19th of February of this year. On the 2nd of March, Commodore Preble, who had divided his force so as to keep some of the small vessels off Tripoli blockading, proceeded to Malta, and on his return, he sailed again, on the 21st, for the station off the enemy's port. The Siren, 16, Lieutenant Com. Stewart, and Nautilus, 12, Lieutenant Com. Somers, were the blockading vessels at this time, and early one morning, while coming from the eastward to recover lost ground, a vessel with the appearance of a brig of war was seen lying-to in the offing. As soon as he made the Americans, the stranger endeavoured to beat back into the harbour again, out of which he had lately come; but the Nautilus being sent close in to employ the gun-boats, should they attempt to come out, the Siren cut him off from the port, and soon got alongside. This vessel proved to be the Transfer, a privateer out of Malta, with a British commission, and she had an armament of sixteen carronades, and

a crew of eighty men. When the Siren ran alongside, the Transfer's people were at quarters, but no resistance being attempted, she was captured for a violation of the blockade. Subsequent information induced Commodore Preble to believe that she belonged, in fact, to the bashaw of Tripoli, and that the commission under which she sailed was obtained by means of the Tripolitan consul in Malta, who was a native of that island, and for whose appearance on board, the brig was actually waiting, when taken.

As the Transfer had been an English gun brig, and was equipped for war, Commodore Preble sent her to Syracuse, where she was appraised, manned, and taken into the service for the time being. She was called the Scourge, and the command of her was given to Lieutenant Com. Dent, the acting captain of the Constitution*.

Remaining off Tripoli a few days, Commodore Preble was next actively employed in running from port to port, in order to look into the affairs of the different regencies, to communicate with the captives in Tripoli, and to make his arrangements for pursuing a warfare better suited to bringing the bashaw to

* Mr. Jefferson is said to have carried his hostility to blockades so far, as to refuse to suffer the Transfer to be regularly condemned, although, when she was sent to America, she was sold, and the money was put in the treasury. In the war of 1812, or eight or ten years after her capture, the brig was legally condemned, and the prize-money was paid in 1815!

terms. The king of the Two Sicilies being at war with Tripoli, also, in furtherance of the latter duty, the Constitution went to Naples, in order to obtain some assistance in executing his projects. Here he got an order for two bomb vessels and six gun-boats, with the necessary equipments, and sailed for Messina, where the different craft lay. From this time until the middle of July, Commodore Preble was as actively engaged as ever, in providing for the wants of the captives, in settling a serious difficulty with Tunis, and in preparing for an attack on Tripoli; and we shall quit him, for a moment, to return to the movements before that place.

In April, the Siren, Lieutenant Com. Stewart; Argus, Lieutenant Com. Hull; Enterprise, Lieutenant Com. Decatur; Vixen, Lieutenant Com. Smith; and Scourge, Lieutenant Com. Dent, composed the blockading force, when a felucca was seen stealing along shore, coming from the westward, with a view to enter the harbour in a fog. A general chase ensued, and the felucca took refuge behind a reef of rocks, about ten miles to the westward of Tripoli, where she was run upon a beach of sand. The Siren now made a signal for the boats to go in, in order to destroy the enemy. Mr. Caldwell, the first lieutenant of the Siren, being nearest in, went a-head with the launch and cutter of that brig, while the others followed as the vessels came up. As he approached the shore, the boat of Mr. Caldwell got on a sunken rock, and

the enemy, who had begun to collect in force, particularly in cavalry, opened a sharp fire of musketry. Several of the Americans were killed and wounded, and perceiving that the enemy were both too strong and too well posted to be attacked by so feeble a force, Mr. Caldwell returned, directing the different boats, as he met them, to retire also.

The Argus and schooners now obtained positions where they could throw their shot into the felucca, which was soon rendered unseaworthy. While this was doing, the Siren ran down, opened a ravine in which the Turks were posted, and dislodged them by a smart discharge of grape. Afterwards, a broadside or two were thrown in among a strong body of cavalry, which had the effect of rendering them cautious in their operations on the coast. This little affair illustrates the nature of the ordinary warfare that was then carried on, the Tripolitans sending out bodies of soldiers to cover the retreat of any vessel that was expected with supplies. On this occasion, the felucca was said to be loaded with salt, an article that then bore an enormous price in Tripoli.

It was July 21st, 1804, when Commodore Preble was able to sail from Malta, with all the force he had collected, to join the vessels cruising off Tripoli. The blockade had been kept up with vigour for some months, and the commodore felt that the season had now arrived for more active operations. He had with him the Constitution, Enterprise,

Nautilus, the two bomb vessels, and the six gun-boats. The bomb vessels were only of thirty tons measurement, and carried a thirteen-inch mortar each. In scarcely any respect were they suited for the duty that was expected of them. The gun-boats were little better, being shallow, unseaworthy craft, of about twenty-five tons burthen, in which long iron twenty-fours had been mounted. Each boat had one gun and thirty-five men; the latter, with the exception of a few Neapolitans, being taken from the different vessels of the squadron. The Tripolitan gun-boats, which have already been described, were altogether superior, and the duty should have been exactly reversed, in order to suit the qualities of the respective craft; the boats of Tripoli having been built to go on the coast, while those possessed by the Americans were intended solely for harbour defence. In addition to their other bad qualities, these Neapolitan boats were found neither to sail nor to row even tolerably well. It was necessary to tow them, by larger vessels, the moment they got into rough water; and when it blew heavily, there was always danger of towing them under. In addition to this force, Commodore Preble had obtained six long twenty-six pounders for the upper deck of the Constitution, which were mounted in the waist.

When the American commander assembled his whole force before Tripoli, on the 25th of July, 1804, it consisted of the Constitution, 44; Com-

modore Preble; Siren, 16, Lieutenant Com. Stewart; Argus, 16, Lieutenant Com. Hull; Scourge, 14, Lieutenant Com. Dent; Vixen, 12, Lieutenant Com. Smith; Nautilus, 12, Lieutenant Com. Somers; Enterprise, 12, Lieutenant Com. Decatur; the two bomb vessels, and six gun-boats. In some respects this was a well appointed force for the duty required, while in others it was lamentably deficient. Another heavy ship, in particular, was wanted, and the means for bombarding had all the defects that may be anticipated. The two heaviest brigs had armaments of twenty-four pound carronades; the other brig, and two of the schooners, armaments of eighteen pound carronades; while the Enterprise retained her original equipment of long sixes, in consequence of her ports being unsuited to the new guns. As the Constitution had a gun-deck battery of thirty long twenty-fours, with six long twenty-sixes, and some lighter long guns above, it follows that the Americans could bring twenty-two twenty-fours and six twenty-sixes to bear on the stone walls of the town, in addition to a few light chase guns in the small vessels, and the twelve-pounders of the frigate's quarter deck and forecastle. On the whole, there appears to have been in the squadron, twenty-eight heavy long guns, with about twenty lighter, that might be brought to play on the batteries simultaneously. Opposed to these means of offence, the bashaw had one hundred and fifteen guns in battery, most of them quite heavy, and nineteen gun-boats

that, of themselves, so far as metal was concerned, were nearly equal to the frigate. Moored in the harbour were also two large galleys, two schooners, and a brig, all of which were armed and strongly manned. The American squadron was manned by a thousand and sixty persons, all told, while the bashaw had assembled a force that has been estimated as high as twenty-five thousand, Arabs and Turks included. The only advantages possessed by the assailants, in the warfare that is so soon to follow, were those which are dependent on spirit, discipline, and system.

The vessels could not anchor until the 28th, when they ran in, with the wind at E. S. E., and came-to, by signal, about a league from the town. This was hardly done, however, before the wind came suddenly round to N. N. W., thence to N. N. E., and it began to blow strong, with a heavy sea setting directly on shore. At six p. m., a signal was made for the vessels to weigh, and to gain an offing. Fortunately, the wind continued to haul to the eastward, or there would have been great danger of towing the gun-boats under, while carrying sail to claw off the land. The gale continued to increase until the 31st, when it blew tremendously. The courses of the Constitution were blown away, though reefed, and it would have been impossible to save the bomb-vessels and gun-boats, had not the wind hauled so far to the southward as to give them the advantage of a weather shore, and of comparatively

smooth water. Fortunately, the gale ceased the next day.

On the 3rd of August, 1804, the squadron ran in again, and got within a league of the town, with a pleasant breeze at the eastward. The enemy's gun-boats and galleys had come outside of the rocks, and were lying there in two divisions; one near the eastern, and the other near the western entrance, or about half a mile apart. At the same time, it was seen that all the batteries were manned, as if an attack was not only expected, but invited.

At half-past 12, the Constitution wore with her head off shore, and showed a signal for all vessels to come within hail. As he came up, each commander was ordered to prepare to attack the shipping and batteries. The bomb-vessels and gun-boats were immediately manned, and such was the high state of discipline in the squadron, that in one hour every thing was ready for the contemplated service.

On this occasion, Commodore Preble made the following distribution of that part of his force, which was manned from the other vessels of his squadron.

One bombard was commanded by Lieutenant-Com. Dent, of the Scourge.

The other bombard by Mr. Robinson, first lieutenant of the Constitution.

First division of gun-boats.

No. 1. Lieutenant Com. Somers, of the Nautilus.
" 2. Lieutenant James Decatur, of the Nautilus.
" 3. Lieutenant Blake, of the Argus.

Second division of gun-boats.

No. 4. Lieutenant Com. Decatur, of the Enterprise.
" 5. Lieutenant Bainbridge, of the Enterprise.
" 6. Lieutenant Trippe, of the Vixen.

At half-past one, the Constitution wore again, and stood towards the town. At two, the gun-boats were cast off, and formed in advance, covered by the brigs and schooners, and half an hour later, the signal was shown to engage. The attack was commenced by the two bombards, which began to throw shells into the town. It was followed by the batteries, which were instantly in a blaze, and then the shipping on both sides opened their fire, within reach of grape.

The eastern, or most weatherly division of the enemy's gun-boats, nine in number, as being least supported, was the aim of the American gun-boats. But the bad qualities of the latter craft were quickly apparent, for, as soon as Mr. Decatur steered towards the enemy, with an intention to come to close quarters, the division of Mr. Somers, which was a little to leeward, found it difficult to sustain him. Every effort was made by the latter officer, to get far enough to windward to join in the attack, but finding it impracticable, he bore up, and ran down alone on five of the enemy to leeward, and engaged them all within pistol shot, throwing showers of grape, cannister, and musket balls among them. In order to do this, as soon as near enough, the sweeps were got out, and the boat was backed

astern, to prevent her from drifting in among the enemy. No. 3 was closing fast, but a signal of recall* being shown from the Constitution, she hauled out of the line to obey, and losing ground, she kept more aloof, firing at the boats and shipping in the harbour, while No. 2, Mr. James Decatur, was enabled to join the division to windward. No. 5, Mr. Bainbridge, lost her latine-yard, while still in tow of the Siren, but, though unable to close, she continued advancing, keeping up a heavy fire, and finally touched on the rocks.

By these changes, Lieutenant Com. Decatur† had three boats that dashed forward with him, though one belonged to the division of Mr. Somers, *viz.* No. 4, No. 6, and No. 2. The officers in command of these three boats, went steadily on, without hearing a shot, until within the smoke of the enemy. Here they delivered their fire, throwing in a terrible discharge of grape and musket balls, and the order was given to board. Up to this moment, the odds had been as three to one against the assailants, and it was now, if possible, increased. The brigs and schooners could no longer assist. The Turkish boats were not only the heaviest and

* This signal was bent on by mistake, and was shown only for a moment; but the fact that it was shown, was established before a court of Inquiry, which exonerated Mr. Blake from censure.

† He was Captain Decatur at the time, but the fact was not yet known in the squadron.

the best in every sense, but they were much the strongest manned. The combat now assumed a character of chivalrous prowess and of desperate personal efforts, that belongs to the middle ages, rather than to struggles of our own times. Its details, indeed savour more of the glow of romance, than of the sober severity that we are accustomed to associate with reality.

Lieutenant Com. Decatur took the lead. He had no sooner discharged his shower of musket balls, than No. 4 was laid alongside the opposing boat of the enemy, and he went into her, followed by Lieutenant Thorn, Mr. M'Donough, and all the Americans of his crew. The Tripolitan boat was divided nearly in two parts, by a long open hatchway; and as the people of No. 4 came in on one side, the Turks retreated to the other, making a sort of ditch of the open space. This caused an instant of delay, and, perhaps, fortunately, for it permitted the assailants to act together. As soon as ready, Mr. Decatur charged round each end of the hatchway, and after a short struggle, a portion of the Turks were piked and bayoneted, while the rest submited, or leaped into the water*.

No sooner had Mr. Decatur got possession of the boat first assailed, than he took her in tow, and bore

* It is probable that the crew of this boat was in a measure staggered by the close fire of the gun, as No. 4 approached, her captain having received no fewer than fourteen musket balls in his body, by that one discharge.

down on the one next to leeward. Running the enemy aboard, as before, he went into him, with most of his officers and men. The captain of the Tripolitan vessel was a large, powerful man, and Mr. Decatur personally charged him with a pike. The weapon, however, was seized by the Turk, wrested from the hands of the assailant, and turned against its owner. The latter parried a thrust, and made a blow with his sword at the pike, with a view to cut off its head. The sword hit the iron, and broke at the hilt, and at the next instant the Turk made another thrust. Nothing was left to the gallant Decatur, but his arm, with which he so far averted the blow, as to receive the pike only through the flesh of his breast. Pushing the iron from the wound, flesh and all, he sprang within the weapon, and grappled his antagonist. The pike fell between the two, and a short trial of strength succeeded, in which the Turk prevailed. As the combatants fell, however, Mr. Decatur so far released himself as to lie side by side with his foe on the deck. The Tripolitan now endeavoured to reach his poniard, while his hand was firmly held by that of his enemy. At this critical instant, when life or death depended on a moment well employed, or a moment lost, Mr. Decatur drew a small pistol from the pocket of his vest, passed the arm that was free round the body of the Turk, pointed the muzzle in, and fired. The ball passed entirely through the body of the musselman, and lodged in the clothes of his foe. At the same

instant, Mr. Decatur, felt the grasp that had almost smothered him relax, and he was liberated. He sprang up, and the Tripolitan lay dead at his feet.

In such a mélée, it cannot be supposed that the struggle of the two leaders would go unnoticed. An enemy raised his sabre to cleave the skull of Mr. Decatur, while he was occupied by his enemy, and a young man of the Enterprise's crew interposed an arm to save him. The blow was intercepted, but the limb was severed to a bit of skin. A fresh rush was now made upon the enemy, who was overcome without much further resistance.

An idea of the desperate nature of the fighting that distinguished this remarkable assault, may be gained from the amount of the loss. The two boats captured by Lieutenant Com. Decatur, had about eighty men in them, of whom fifty-two are known to have been killed and wounded; most of the latter very badly. As only eight prisoners were made who were not wounded, and many jumped overboard, and swam to the rocks, it is not improbable that the Turks suffered still more severely. Lieutenant Com. Decatur himself was wounded, and securing his second prize, he hauled off to rejoin the squadron; all the rest of the enemy's division that were not taken, having, by this time, cut and run into the harbour, passing through the openings between the rocks.

While Lieutenant Com. Decatur was thus nobly employed to windward, his brother, Mr. James

Decatur, the first lieutenant of the Nautilus, was emulating his example in No. 2. Reserving his fire, like No. 4, this young officer dashed into the smoke, and was on the point of boarding, when he received a musket ball in his forehead*. The boats met and rebounded; and in the confusion of the death of the commanding officer of No. 2, the Turk cut, and was enabled to escape, under a heavy fire from the Americans. It was said, at the time, that the enemy had struck before Mr. Decatur fell, though the fact must remain in doubt. It is, however, believed that he sustained a very severe loss.

In the mean time, Mr. Trippe, in No. 6, the last of the three boats that was able to reach the weather division, was not idle. Reserving his fire, like the others, he delivered it with deadly effect, when closing, and went aboard of his enemy in the smoke. In this instance, the boats also separated by the shock of the collision, leaving Mr. Trippe, with Mr. J. D. Henley, and nine men only, on board the Tripolitan. Here, too, the commanders singled each other out, and a severe personal combat occurred, while the work of death was going on around them. The Turk was young, and of a large athletic form; and he soon compelled his slighter but more active foe to fight with caution. Advancing on Mr. Trippe,

* The ball, or balls, by which Mr. Decatur was killed, were said to have been connected by a strong wire. The wire struck him on the forehead, and bending, the two balls entered the temples, one on each side.

he would strike a blow, and receive a thrust in return. In this manner, he gave the American commander no less than eight sabre wounds in the head, and two in the breast; when making a sudden rush, he struck a ninth blow on the head, which brought Mr. Trippe upon a knee. Rallying all his forces in a desperate effort, the latter, who still retained the short pike with which he fought, made a thrust that passed the weapon through his gigantic adversary, and tumbled him on his back. As soon as the Tripolitan officer fell, the remainder of his people submited.

The boat taken by Mr. Trippe, was one of the largest belonging to the bashaw. The number of her men is not positively known, but living and dead, thirty-six were found in her, of whom twenty-one were either killed or wounded. When it is remembered that but eleven Americans boarded her, the achievement must pass for one of the most gallant on record*.

All this time the cannonade and bombardment continued without ceasing. Lieutenant Com.

* While Mr. Trippe was so hard pressed by his antagonist a Turk aimed a blow at him, from behind, but just before the latter struck, Serjeant Meredith, of the marines, passed a bayonet through his body. While the prizes were hauling off, no one had thought, in the confusion of such a scene, of lowering the flag of the Tripolitan boat, and she was seen advancing with the enemy's ensign set. The Vixen gave her a broadside, which brought down colours, masts, latine-yard, and all. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Somers, in No. 1, sustained by the brigs and schooners, had forced the remaining boats to retreat, and this resolute officer pressed them so hard, as to be compelled to wear within a hundred yards of a battery of twelve guns, quite near the mole. Her destruction seemed inevitable, as the boat came slowly round, when a shell fell into the battery, most opportunely blew up the platform, and drove the enemy out, to a man. Before the guns could be used again, the boats had got in tow one of the small vessels.

There was a division of five boats and two galleys of the enemy, that had been held in reserve within the rocks, and these rallied their retreating countrymen, and made two efforts to come out and intercept the Americans and their prizes, but they were kept in check by the fire of the frigate and small vessels. The Constitution maintained a very heavy fire, and silenced several of the batteries, though they re-opened as soon as she had passed. The bombards were covered with the spray of shot, but continued to throw shells to the last.

At half-past four, the wind coming round to the northward, a signal was made for the gun-boats and bomb-vessels to rejoin the small vessels, and another to take them and the prizes in tow. The last order was handsomely executed by the brigs and schooners, under cover of a blaze of fire from the frigate. A quarter of an hour later, the Constitution herself hauled off, and ran out of gun-shot.

Thus terminated the first serious attack that was

made on the town and batteries of Tripoli. Its effect on the enemy, was of the most salutary kind; the manner in which their gun-boats had been taken, by boarding, having made a lasting and deep impression. The superiority of the Christians in gunnery, was generally admitted before, but here was an instance in which the Turks had been overcome by inferior numbers, hand to hand, a species of conflict in which they had been thought to excel. Perhaps no instance of more desperate fighting of the sort, without defensive armour, is to be found in the pages of history. Three gun-boats were sunk in the harbour, in addition to the three that were taken, and the loss of the Tripolitans by shot, must have been very heavy. About fifty shells were thrown into the town, but little damage appears to have been done in this way, very few of the bombs, on account of the imperfect materials that had been furnished, exploding. The batteries were a good deal damaged, but the town suffered no essential injury.

On the part of the Americans, only fourteen were killed and wounded in the affair, and all of these, with the exception of one man, belonged to the gun-boats. The Constitution, though under fire two hours, escaped much better than could have been expected. She received one heavy shot through her main-mast, had a quarter-deck gun injured*, and

* A shot came in aft, hit the gun, and broke in several pieces. Commodore Preble was directly in its range, but he escaped by the shot's breaking. One of the fragments took off the tip of a marine's elbow, quite near him.

was a good deal cut up aloft. The enemy had calculated his range for a more distant cannonade, and generally overshot the ships. The Constitution had her main-royal-yard shot away by this mistake.

On the occasion of the battle of the 3rd of August, the officers who had opportunities of particularly distinguishing themselves, were Lieutenants Com. Decatur and Somers, Lieutenants Trippe, Decatur, Bainbridge, and Thorn, and Messrs. M'Donough, Henley, Ridgely, and Miller. But the whole squadron behaved well; and the Constitution was handled, under the fire of the batteries, with the steadiness of a ship working into a roadstead.

CHAPTER IV.

Renewal of the bombardment of Tripoli—Destruction of a boat under the command of Lieutenant Caldwell—Arrival of the John Adams, Captain Chauncey—Ineffectual negociation with the Bashaw—Narrow escape of the Argus—Preparations for another attack—The bombardment—Injury sustained by the frigate, Constitution.

THE vessels hauled off, and anchored about two leagues from Tripoli, to repair their damages. On the morning of the 5th, the Argus brought-to a small French privateer that had just got out of the harbour, and Commodore Preble induced her commander to return and carry in all the badly wounded among his prisoners. From the captain of this vessel, he learned that the enemy had suffered even more than had been expected in the attack of the 3rd, particularly in and about the port. On the 7th, the privateer came out, bringing a letter from the French consul, stating that the bashaw was much more disposed to treat than previously to the late affair, and advising the commodore to send in a flag of truce, with a view to negociate. As the castle made no signal to support this proposition, it was not regarded.

Between the 3rd and the 7th, the squadron was

occupied in altering the rig of the three captured gun-boats, and in putting them in a condition for service. As soon as the latter were equipped, they were numbered 7, 8, and 9, and the command of them was given to Lieutenants Crane, Caldwell, and Thorn. At nine a. m., on the 7th, the light vessels weighed, and the bombards proceeded to take a position in a small bay to the westward of the town, where they were not much exposed to shot. At half-past two, the bombards, having gained their anchorage, commenced throwing shells, and the gun-boats opened a heavy fire on the batteries. The effect on the latter was soon apparent, and many of their guns were rendered useless. In the height of the cannonade, a strange vessel appeared in the offing, and the Argus was sent in chase. The enemy now began to get his galleys and gun-boats in motion, and once or twice they advanced towards the opening between the rocks, and commenced a fire; but the Constitution, Nautilus, and Enterprise, being stationed to windward to cut them off, and the Siren and Vixen lying near the American gun-vessels to cover the latter, the enemy, after the lesson received on the 3rd, were afraid to venture.

At half-past three, or after the action had lasted about an hour, a hot shot passed through the magazine of No. 8, Lieutenant Caldwell, the boat taken by Mr. Trippe in the affair of the 3rd, and she immediately blew up. When the smoke cleared away, all the after part of the boat was under water, while

Mr. Robert T. Spence, of the Siren, and eleven men, were forward, loading the long twenty-six pounder that formed her armament. This gun was loaded, and fired, and its gallant crew gave three cheers, as their vessel sunk beneath them. Mr. Spence, who could not swim, saved himself on an oar, while the rest of the people got on board the different boats, where they continued to fight during the remainder of the action.

No. 8, when she blew up, had a crew of twenty-eight persons in all, of whom ten were killed and six wounded. Among the former was Mr. Caldwell, her commander, the first lieutenant of the Siren, and Mr. Dorsey, a midshipman of the same vessel. These two officers were greatly regretted, as both bade fair to be ornaments to their profession*.

* Mr. Edmund P. Kennedy, one of the gunner's crew belonging to the Siren, was the captain of the gun, on board No. 8, when she blew up. Mr. Kennedy was a young gentleman of Maryland, who had quitted school in quest of adventure, and, having been impressed into the British navy, on obtaining his discharge in the Mediterranean, he entered under the flag of his country. In consequence of his good conduct on this occasion, and from a desire to place him in a station better suited to his pretensions, Commodore Preble made Mr. Kennedy an acting midshipman. The appointment was confirmed at home, and the gentleman in question has since worn a broad pennant. It is believed that this officer and one other, are the only two in the navy who can boast of having gone through all the gradations of the service, from forward, aft.

During the attack of the 7th, Lieutenant Com. Somers was standing leaning against the flag-staff of No. 1, as the boat

At half-past five, or after the cannonade had lasted nearly three hours, the Constitution made a signal for the brigs and schooners to take the bombards and gun-boats in tow, and the squadron hauled off for its anchorage again. Just at this time, the Argus made a signal that the sail in sight was a friend.

The gun-boats, in this attack, suffered considerably. In consequence of the wind's being on-shore, Commodore Preble had kept the frigate out of the action, and the enemy's batteries had no interruption from the heavy fire of that ship. Several of the American boats had been hulled, and all suffered materially in their sails and rigging. No. 6, Lieutenant Wadsworth, had her latine-yard shot away. The killed and wounded amounted to eighteen men.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the John Adams, 28, Captain Chauncey, came within hail of the Constitution, and reported herself as just from America. By this ship, Commodore Preble received despatches informing him of the equipment of the vessels that were to come out under Commodore Barron, and of the necessity, which was thought to exist, of superseding him in the command. Captain Chauncey also stated the probability of the speedy arrival of the expected ships, which were to sail shortly after

advanced to her station. He saw a shot coming directly in a line with his head, and stooped to avoid it. The shot cut the flag-staff in two, and, after the affair, Mr. Somers stood up against the stump, when it was found that, had he not been so quick in his movements, the shot would have hit his chin.

his own departure. As the John Adams had brought stores for the squadron, and had put most of her gun-carriages in the other frigates to enable her to do so, she could be of no immediate use; and the rest of the squadron being so soon expected, Commodore Preble was induced to delay the other attacks he had meditated, on the ground of prudence.

By the John Adams, intelligence reached the squadron of the re-establishment of the rank of masters and commanders, and the new commissions were brought out to the officers before Tripoli, who had been promoted. In consequence of these changes, Lieutenant Com. Decatur was raised to the rank of captain, and became the second in command in the squadron; while Lieutenants Com. Stewart, Hull, Chauncey, Smith, and Somers, became masters commandant, in the order in which they are named. Several of the young gentlemen were also promoted, including most of those who had a share in the destruction of the Philadelphia.

The bashaw now became more disposed than ever to treat, the warfare promising much annoyance, with scarcely any corresponding benefits. The cannonading did his batteries and vessels great injuries, though the town probably suffered less than might have been expected, being, in a measure, protected by its walls. The shells, too, that had been procured at Messina, turned out to be very bad, few exploding when they fell*. The case was different

* According to the private journal of Captain Bainbridge, then

with the shot, which did their work effectually on the different batteries. Some idea may be formed of the spirit of the last attack, from the report of Commodore Preble, who stated that nine guns, one of which was used but a short time, threw five hundredd heavy shot, in the course of little more than two hours.

Although the delay caused by the expected arrival of the reinforcement, was improved to open a negociation, it was without effect. The bashaw had lowered his demands quite half, but he still insisted on a ransom of $500 a man for his prisoners, though he waived the usual claim for tribute in future. These propositions were rejected, it being expected that, after the arrival of the reinforcement, the treaty might be made on the usual terms of civilized nations.

On the 9th of August, the Argus, Captain Hull, had a narrow escape. That brig having stood in towards the town to reconnoitre, with Commodore Preble on board, one of the heaviest of the shot from the batteries raked her bottom, for some distance, and cut the planks half through. An inch or two of variation in the direction of this shot, would infallibly have sunk the brig, and that probably in a very few minutes.

a prisoner in the town, out of forty-eight shells, thrown by the two bombards, in the attack of the 7th, but one exploded. Agreeably to the records made by this officer at the time, the bombs, on no occasion, did much injury, and the town generally, suffered less by shot even, than was commonly supposed.

No intelligence arriving from the expected vessels, Commodore Preble, about the 16th, began to make his preparations for another attack, sending the Enterprise, Lieutenant Com. Robinson, to Malta, with orders for the agent to forward transports with water, the vessels being on a short allowance of that great essential. On the night of the 18th, Captains Decatur and Chauncey went close in, in boats, and reconnoitered the situation of the enemy. These officers on their return, reported that the vessels of the Tripolitan flotilla were moored abreast of each other, in a line extending from the mole to the castle, with their heads to the eastward, which was making a defence directly across the inner harbour, or galley-mole.

A gale, however, compelled the American squadron to stand off shore on the morning of the 18th, which caused another delay in the contemplated movements. While lying-to, in the offing, the vessels met the transports from Malta, and the Enterprise returned, bringing no intelligence from the expected reinforcement.

On the 24th, the squadron stood in towards the town again, with a light breeze from the eastward. At eight, p. m., the Constitution anchored just out of gun-shot of the batteries, but it fell calm, and the boats of the different vessels were sent to tow the bombards to a position favourable for throwing shells. This was thought to have been effected by two, a. m., when the two vessels began to heave

their bombs, covered by the gun-boats. At daylight, they all retired, without having received a shot in return. Commodore Preble appears to have distrusted the result of this bombardment, the first attempted at night, and there is reason to think it produced but little effect*.

The weather proving very fine and the wind favourable, on the 28th, Commodore Preble determined to make a more vigorous assault on the town and batteries, than any which had preceded it, and his dispositions were taken accordingly. The gun-boats and bombards requiring so many men to manage them, the Constitution and the small vessels had been compelled to go into action short of hands, in the previous affairs. To obviate this difficulty, the John Adams had been kept before the town, and a portion of her officers and crew, and nearly all her boats, were put in requisition, on the present occasion. Captain Chauncey, himself, with about seventy of his people, went on board the flag-ship, and all the boats of the squadron were hoisted out and manned. The bombards were crippled and could not be brought into service, a circumstance that probably was of no great consequence, on account of the badness of the materials they were compelled to use†. These two vessels, with the Scourge, trans-

* Captain Bainbridge, in his private journal, says, that all the shells thrown, on this occasion, fell short.

† It is stated that Commodore Preble subsequently discovered lead in the fuse-holes of many of the bombs. It was supposed

ports, and John Adams, were anchored well off at sea, as not being available in the contemplated cannonading.

Every thing being prepared, a little after midnight the following gun-boats proceeded to their stations, *viz.*—No. 1, Captain Somers; No. 2, Lieutenant Gordon; No. 3, Mr. Brooks, master of the Argus; No. 4, Captain Decatur; No. 5, Lieutenant Lawrence; No. 6, Lieutenant Wadsworth; No. 7, Lieutenant Crane; and No. 9, Lieutenant Thorn. They were divided into two divisions, as before, Captain Decatur having become the superior officer, however, by his recent promotion. About three, a. m., the gun-boats advanced close to the rocks at the entrance of the harbour, covered by the Siren, Captain Stewart; Argus, Captain Hull; Vixen, Captain Smith; Nautilus, Lieutenant Reed; and Enterprise, Lieutenant Com. Robinson, and accompanied by all the boats of the squadron. Here they anchored, with springs on their cables, and commenced a heavy fire on the enemy's shipping, castle, and town. As soon as the day dawned, the Constitution weighed and stood in towards the rocks, under a heavy fire from the batteries, Fort English, and the castle. At this time, the enemy's gun-boats and galleys, thirteen in number, were closely and warmly engaged with the eight American boats; and the

that this had been done by treachery, by means of French agents in Sicily, the shells having been charged to resist the French invasion.

Constitution, ordering the latter to retire by signal, as their ammunition was mostly consumed, delivered a heavy fire of round and grape on the former as she came up. One of the enemy's boats was soon sunk, two were run ashore to prevent them from sinking, and the rest retreated.

The Constitution now continued to stand on, until she had run in within musket shot of the mole, when she brought-to, and opened upon the town, batteries, and castle. Here she lay three-quarters of an hour, pouring in a fierce fire, with great effect, until finding that all the small vessels were out of gun-shot, she hauled off. About seven hundred heavy shot were hove at the enemy, in this attack, besides a good many from the chase-guns of the small vessels. The enemy sustained much damage, and lost many men. The American brigs and schooners were a good deal injured aloft, as was the Constitution. Although the latter ship was so long within reach of grape, many of which shot struck her, she had not a man hurt! Several of her shrouds, back-stays, trusses, spring-stays, chains, lifts, and a great deal of running rigging were shot away, and yet her hull escaped with very trifling injuries. A boat belonging to the John Adams, under the orders of Mr. John Orde Creighton, one of that ship's master's mates, was sunk by a double-headed shot, which killed three men, and badly wounded a fourth, but the officer and the rest of the boat's crew were saved.

In this attack a heavy shot from the American

gun-boats struck the castle, passed through a wall, and rebounding from the opposite side of the room, fell within six inches of Captain Bainbridge, who was in bed at the moment, and covered him with stones and mortar, from under which he was taken, considerably hurt, by his own officers. More injury was done the town in this attack than in either of the others, the shot appearing to have told on many of the houses.

From this time to the close of the month, preparations were making to use the bombards again, and for renewing the cannonading, another transport having arrived from Malta, without bringing any intelligence of the vessels under the orders of Com. Barron. On the 3rd of September, every thing being ready, at half-past two the signal was made for the small vessels to advance. The enemy had improved the time as well as the Americans, and they had raised three of their own gun-boats that had been sunk in the affairs of the 3rd and of the 28th of August. These craft were now added to the rest of their flotilla.

The Tripolitans had also changed their mode of fighting. Hitherto, with the exception of the affair of the 3rd, their galleys and gun-boats had lain either behind the rocks, in positions to fire over them, or at the openings between them, and they consequently found themselves to leeward of the frigate and small American cruisers, the latter invariably choosing easterly winds to advance with, as

they would permit crippled vessels to retire. On the 3rd of August, the case excepted, the Turks had been so roughly treated by being brought hand to hand, when they evidently expected nothing more than a cannonade, that they were not disposed to venture again outside of the harbour. On the 3rd of September, however, the day at which we have now arrived, their plan of defence was judiciously altered. No sooner was it perceived that the American squadron was in motion, with a fresh design to annoy them, than their gun-boats and galleys got under way, and worked up to windward, until they had gained a station on the weather side of the harbour, directly under the fire of Fort English, as well as of a new battery that had been erected a little to the westward of the latter.

This disposition of the enemy's force required a corresponding change on the part of the Americans. The bombards were directed to take stations, and to commence throwing their shells, while the gun-boats, in two divisions, commanded as usual, by Captains Decatur and Somers, and covered by the brigs and schooners, assailed the enemy's flotilla. This arrangement separated the battle into two distinct parts, leaving the bomb-vessels very much exposed to the fire of the castle, the mole, crown, and other batteries.

The Tripolitan gun-boats and galleys stood the fire of the American flotilla, until the latter had got within reach of musketry, when they retreated.

The assailants now separated, some of the gun-boats following the enemy, and pouring in their fire, while the others, with the brigs and schooners, cannonaded Fort English.

In the mean while, perceiving that the bombards were suffering severely from the undisturbed fire of the guns to which they were exposed, Commodore Preble ran down in the Constitution, quite near the rocks, and within the bomb vessels, and brought-to. Here the frigate opened as warm a fire as probably ever came out of the broadside of a single-decked ship, and in a position where seventy heavy guns could bear upon her. The whole harbour, in the vicinity of the town, was glittering with the spray of her shot, and each battery, as usual, was silenced as soon as it drew her attention. After throwing more than three hundred round shot, besides grape and cannister, the frigate hauled off, having previously ordered the other vessels to retire from action by signal.

The gun-boats, in this affair, were an hour and fifteen minutes in action, in which time they threw four hundred round shot, besides grape and cannister. Lieutenant Trippe, who had so much distinguished himself, and who had received so many wounds that day month, resumed the command of No. 6, for this occasion. Lieutenant Morris, of the Argus, was in charge of No. 3. All the small vessels suffered, as usual, aloft, and the Argus sustained some damage in her hull.

The Constitution was so much exposed in the attack just related, that her escape can only be attributed to the weight of her own fire. It had been found, in the previous affairs, that, so long as this ship could play upon a battery, the Turks could not be kept at its guns; and it was chiefly while she was veering, or tacking, that she suffered. But, after making every allowance for the effect of her own cannonade, and for the imperfect gunnery of the enemy, it creates wonder that a single frigate could lie opposed to more than double her own number of available guns, and these too, principally, of heavier metal, while they were protected by stone walls. On this occasion, the frigate was not supported by the gun-boats at all, and she became the sole object of the enemy's aim, after the bombards had withdrawn.

As might have been expected, the Constitution suffered more, in the attack just recorded, than in any of the previous affairs, though she received nothing larger than grape in her hull. She had three shells through her canvas, one of which rendered the main-top-sail momentarily useless. Her sails, standing and running rigging were also much cut with shot. Captain Chauncey, of the John Adams, and a party of his officers and crew, served in the Constitution again, on this day, and were of essential use. Indeed, in all the service which succeeded her arrival, the commander, officers, and crew of the John Adams were actively employed, though

the ship herself could not be brought before the enemy for the want of gun-carriages.

The bombards having been much exposed, suffered accordingly. No. 1, was so much crippled, as to be unable to move without being towed, and was near sinking, when she was got to the anchorage. Every shroud she had was shot away. Commodore Preble expressed himself satisfied with the good conduct of every man in the squadron. All the vessels appear to have been well conducted, and efficient in their several stations. Of the effect of the shells, there is no account to be relied on, though it is probable that, as usual, many did not explode. There is no doubt, however, that the bombs were well directed, and that they fell into the town.

While Commodore Preble was thus actively employed in carrying on the war against the enemy, the attack just related, having been the fifth made on the town within a month, he was meditating another species of annoyance, that about this time was nearly ready to be put in execution.

CHAPTER V.

The ketch, Intrepid, fitted as a floating mine—Desperate enterprise and dreadful fate of this vessel—Commodore Preble superseded—His return home—Receives the thanks of Congress—Sympathy of the nation in behalf of the relatives of officers killed off Tripoli.

THE ketch, Intrepid, that had been employed by Mr. Decatur in burning the Philadelphia, was still in the squadron, having been used of late as a transport between Tripoli and Malta. This vessel had been converted into an "infernal," or, to use more intelligible terms, she had been fitted as a floating mine, with the intention of sending her into the harbour of Tripoli, to explode among the enemy's cruisers. As every thing connected with the history of this little vessel, as well as with the enterprise in which she was now to be employed, will have interest with the public, we shall be more particular than common, in giving the details of this affair, as they have reached us through public documents, and oral testimony that is deemed worthy of entire credit.

A small room, or magazine, had been planked up, in the hold of the ketch, just forward of her principal mast. Communicating with this magazine, was a small trunk, or tube, that led aft, to another room, filled with combustibles. In the planked room, or magazine, were placed one hundred barrels of gunpowder in bulk, and on the deck immediately above the powder, were laid 50 thirteen and a half inch shells, and 100 nine-inch shells, with a large quantity of

shot, pieces of kentledge, and fragments of iron of different sorts. A train was laid in the trunk, or tube, and fuses were attached in the proper manner. In addition to this arrangement, the other small room mentioned, was filled with splinters and light wood, which, besides firing the train, were to keep the enemy from boarding, as the flames would be apt to induce them to apprehend an immediate explosion.

The plan was well laid. It was the intention to profit by the first dark night that offered, to carry the ketch as far as possible into the galley mole, to light the fire in the splinter room, and for the men employed, to make their retreat in boats.

The arrangements for carrying this project into effect, appear to have been made with care and prudence. Still the duty, on every account, was deemed desperate. It was necessary, in the first place, to stand in by the western or little passage, in a dull sailing vessel, and with a light wind, directly in the face of several batteries, the fire of which could only be escaped by the enemy's mistaking the ketch for a vessel endeavouring to force the blockade. It would also be required to pass quite near these batteries, and, as the ketch advanced, she would be running in among the gun boats and galleys of the enemy. It is not necessary to point out the hazards of such an exploit, as a simple cannonade directed against a small vessel filled with powder, would of itself be, in the last degree, dangerous. After every thing had succeeded to the perfect hopes of the assailants, there existed the necessity of effecting a retreat, the service being one in which no quarter could be asked.

Such a duty could be confided to none but officers and men of known coolness and courage, of perfect

self-possession and of tried spirit. Captain Somers, who had commanded one division of the gun boats in the different attacks on the town that have been related, in a manner to excite the respect of all who witnessed his conduct, volunteered to take charge of this enterprise; and Lieutenant Wadsworth, of the Constitution, an officer of great merit, offered himself as the second in command. It being unnecessary to send in any more than these two gentlemen, with the few men needed to manage the ketch and row the boats, no other officer was permitted to go, though it is understood that several volunteered.

The night of the 4th of September, or that of the day which succeeded the attack last related, promising to be dark, and there being a good leading wind from the eastward, it was selected for the purpose. Commodore Preble appears to have viewed the result of this expedition with great anxiety, and to have ordered all its preparations, with the utmost personal attention to the details. This feeling is believed to have been increased by his knowledge of the character of the officers who were to go in, and who, it was understood, had expressed a determination neither to be taken, nor to permit the ammunition in the ketch to fall into the enemy's hands. The latter point was one of great importance, it being understood that the Tripolitans, like the Americans, were getting to be in want of powder.* In short, it

* A day or two before the ketch was ready, the commodore himself was trying a port-fire, in the cabin of the Constitution, in the presence of Captain Somers, and one or two other officers, and finding that one burned a particular time, by the watch, he remarked that he thought "it burned longer than was necessary, as the time might enable the enemy to approach and extinguish it before the train would be fired." "I ask for no port-fire at all," was the quiet answer of Captain Somers.

was the general understanding in the squadron, before the ketch proceeded, that her officers had determined not to be taken. Two fast-rowing boats, one belonging to the Constitution, that pulled six oars, and one belonging to the Siren, that pulled four oars, were chosen to bring the party off, and their crews were volunteers from the Constitution and Nautilus. At the last moment, Mr. Israel, an ardent young officer, whose application to go in had been rejected, found means to get on board the ketch, and, in consideration of his gallantry, he was permitted to join the party.

When all was ready, at about eight o'clock in the evening of the day just mentioned, the Intrepid was under way, with the Argus, Vixen and Nautilus in company. Shortly after, the Siren also weighed, by a special order from the commodore, and stood in towards the western passage, or that by which the ketch was to enter, where she remained to look out for the boats.

The Nautilus, Captain Somers' own vessel, accompanied the ketch close in, but, on reaching a position where there was danger of her creating suspicions by being seen, she hauled off, to take her station, like the other small vessels, near the rocks, in order to pick up the retreating boats. The last person of the squadron who had any communication with Captain Somers, was Mr. Washington Reed, the first lieutenant of his own schooner, the Nautilus, who left him about nine o'clock. At that time all was calm, collected and in order on board the "infernal." The general uneasiness was increased by the circumstance that three gun-boats lay near the entrance; and some of the last words of the experienced Decatur, before taking leave of his friend, were to caution him against these boats.

The night was darker than usual, and the last that

may be said to have been seen of the Intrepid, was the shadowy forms of her canvas, as she steered slowly, but steadily, into the obscurity, where the eyes of the many anxious spectators fancied they could still trace her dim outline, most probably after it had totally disappeared. This sinking into the gloom of night, was no bad image of the impenetrable mystery that has veiled the subsequent proceedings of the gallant party on board her.

When the Intrepid was last seen by the naked eye, she was not a musket-shot from the mole, standing directly for the harbour. One officer on board the nearest vessel, the Nautilus, is said, however, to have never lost sight of her with a night-glass, but even he could distinguish no more than her dim proportions. There is a vague rumour that she touched on the rocks, but it does not appear to rest on sufficient authority to be entitled to absolute credit. To the last moment, she appears to have been advancing. About this time the batteries began to fire. Their shot is said to have been directed towards every point where an enemy might be expected, and it is not improbable that some were aimed against the ketch.

The period between the time when the Intrepid was last seen, and that when most of those who watched without the rocks learned her fate, was not very long. This was an interval of intense, almost of breathless expectation, and it was interrupted only by the flashes and roar of the enemy's guns. Various reports exist of what those who gazed into the gloom beheld, or fancied they beheld; but one melancholy fact alone would seem to be beyond contradiction. A fierce and sudden light illuminated the panorama, a torrent of fire streamed upward, that in shape resembled the great eruption of

Vesuvius as it has been described by Pliny, and a concussion followed that made the cruisers in the offing tremble from their trucks to their keels. This sudden blaze of light was followed by a darkness of two-fold intensity, and the guns of the batteries became mute, as if annihilated. Numerous shells had been seen in the air, and some of them descended on the rocks, where they were heard to fall. Their fuses were burning, and a few exploded, but much the greater part were extinguished in the water. The mast, too, had risen perpendicularly, with its rigging and canvass blazing, but the descent veiled all in night.

So sudden and tremendous was the eruption, and so intense the darkness which succeeded, that it was not possible to ascertain the precise position of the ketch at the moment. In the glaring, but fleeting light, no person could say that he had noted more than one material circumstance, the fact that the Intrepid had not reached the point at which she aimed. The shells had not spread far, and those which fell on the rocks were so many proofs of this important truth. There was no other fact to indicate the precise spot where the ketch exploded. A few cries arose from the town, but the subsequent and deep silence that followed was more eloquent than any clamour. The whole of Tripoli was like a city of tombs.

If every eye had been watchful previously to the explosion, every eye now became doubly vigilant to discover the retreating boats. Men got over the sides of the vessels, holding lights, and placing their ears near the water, in the hope of detecting the sounds of even muffled oars; and often was it fancied that the gallant adventurers were near. They never re-appeared. Hour after hour went by, until hope itself began to fail.

Occasionally a rocket gleamed, in the darkness, or a sullen gun was heard from the frigate, as signals to the boats; but the eyes that should have seen the first, were sightless, and the last tolled on the ears of the dead.

The three vessels assigned to that service, hovered around the harbour until the sun rose, but few traces of the Intrepid, and nothing of her devoted crew could be discovered. The wreck of the mast lay on the rocks near the western entrance, and here and there a fragment was visible nigh it. One of the largest of the enemy's gun-boats was missing, and it was observed that two others, which appeared to be shattered, were being hauled upon the shore. The three that had lain across the entrance had disappeared. It was erroneously thought that the castle had sustained some injury from the concussion, though, on the whole, the Americans were left with the melancholy certainty of having met with a serious loss, without obtaining a commensurate advantage.

It is now known that the bottom of the ketch grounded on the north side of the rocks, near the round battery at the end of the mole, and as the wind was at the eastward, this renders it certain that the explosion took place in the western entrance to the harbour, and fully a quarter of a mile from the spot that it was intended the ketch should reach. In the wreck were found two mangled bodies, and four more were picked up on the 6th, floating in the harbour, or lodged on the shore. These bodies were in the most shocking state of mutilation, and, though Captain Bainbridge and one or two of his companions were taken to see them, it was found impossible to distinguish even the officers from the men. It is understood that six more bodies

were found, the day after the explosion, on the shore to the southward of the town, and that a six-oared boat, with one body in it had drifted on the beach a little to the westward*.

These statements account for all those who went in the ketch, and furnish conjectural clues to facts that would otherwise be veiled in impenetrable mystery. The spot where the boat was found, was a proof that the ketch had not got very far into the passage; or the cutter could not have drifted clear of the natural mole to the westward. The reason that the boat and the ketch's bottom were not found near the same spot, was probably owing to the circumstance that the first was acted on more by the wind, and the last by the current; and to the fact that a boat may have drifted through rocks, with which the shore is every where more or less lined, that would have brought up the wreck.

As there was but one body found in the boat, we are left to suppose it was that of the keeper. Of the four-oared boat, or that which belonged to the Siren, there does not appear to have been any tidings, and it was either destroyed by the explosion, sunk by the fall of fragments, or privately appropriated to himself, by some Tripolitan.

From the fact of there being but a single man in the Constitution's cutter, we are left to infer that most of the officers and men were on board the ketch, herself, when she blew up. No person is understood to say that any of the enemy's vessels were seen near the ketch, when she exploded, and, with these meagre premises, we are left to draw our inferences as to the causes of the disaster.

* Captain Bainbridge's private journal.

That Captain Somers was as capable of sacrificing himself, when there was an occasion for it, as any man who ever lived, is probably as true, as it is certain that he would not destroy himself, and much less others, without sufficient reason. It has been supposed that the ketch was boarded by the enemy, and that her resolute commander fired the train, in preference to being taken. The spirit created by the chivalrous exploits of Decatur, and the high-toned discipline and daring of Preble, had communicated to all under their orders as lofty sentiments of duty and zeal, as probably were ever found among an equal body of generous and ardent young men; but it is not easy to discover a motive why the explosion should have been an intentional act of the Americans, and it is easy to discover many why it should not.

There would be but one sufficient justification for an officer's sacrificing himself, or his people, under such circumstances, and that was the impossibility of preventing the ketch from falling into the hands of the enemy, by any other means. Neither the evidence of eye-witnesses, so far as it is available, nor the accounts of the Tripolitans themselves, would appear to show, that when the Intrepid exploded, any enemy was near enough to render so desperate a step necessary. According to the private journal of Captain Bainbridge, neither the town, nor the Turks suffered materially, and he was carried to the beach to see the dead bodies, on the 8th, or two days after the affair. This alone would prove that the ketch did not reach the mole. If the object were merely to destroy the powder, the men would have been previously ordered into the boats, and, even under circumstances that rendered a resort to the fuse inexpedient, the train would have been

used. That only one man was in the largest boat, is known from the condition in which she was found, and this could hardly have happened, under any circumstances, had the magazine been fired intentionally, by means of the train. Every contingency had, doubtless, been foreseen. One man was as able as twenty to apply the match, and we can see but one state of things, besides being boarded by surprise, that would render it likely that the match would have been used until the people were in their boats, or that it would have been applied at any other spot, than at the end of the train, or aft. A surprise of the nature mentioned, would seem to have been impossible, for, though the night was dark, objects might still be seen at some little distance, and it is probable, also, that the party had glasses.

From weighing these circumstances, it is the most rational opinion that the Intrepid exploded accidentally. She was under fire at the time, and though it is improbable that the enemy had any shot heated to repel an attack so unexpected, a cold shot might easily have fired a magazine in the situation of that of the Intrepid. The deck of the ketch, moreover, was covered with loaded shells, and one of these might have been struck and broken. Some other unforeseen accident may have occurred. On the other hand, it is necessary to state, that Commodore Preble firmly believed that his officers blew themselves up, in preference to being made prisoners; an opinion in which it would not be difficult to coincide, were there proof that they were in any immediate danger of such a calamity. It was also the general conjecture in the squadron then before Tripoli, that such had been the fate of these bold adventurers, but it would seem to have been formed at

the time, rather on an opinion of what the party that went in was capable of doing, than on any evidence of what it had actually done.

As it is the province of the historian to present all the leading facts of his subject, we shall add, on the other hand, that many little collateral circumstances appear to have occurred, which may be thought to give force to the truth of the common impression. One of the best authenticated of these, is connected with what was seen, from a vessel that was watching the ketch, though it was not the schooner nearest in. On board this vessel a light was observed moving on a horizontal line, as if carried swiftly along a vessel's deck by some one in hurried motion, and then to drop suddenly, like a lantern sinking beneath a hatchway. Immediately afterwards the ketch exploded, and at that precise spot, which would seem to leave no doubt that this light was on board the Intrepid. But even this by no means establishes the fact that the explosion was intentional. The splinters, that were to keep the enemy aloof, had not been lighted, and this movement with the lantern may have been intended to fire them, and may have had some accidental connexion with the explosion.

In addition to this appearance of the light, which rests on testimony every way entitled to respect, there was a report brought off by the prisoners, then in Tripoli, when liberated, from which another supposition has been formed as to the fate of this devoted vessel, that is not without plausibility. It was said that most of the bodies found had received gun-shot wounds, especially from grape. One body, in particular, was described as having had the small remains of nankeen pantaloons on it, and it was also reported that the

hair* was of a deep black. Through this person, according to the report, no less than three grape-shot had passed. This has been supposed to have been the body of Captain Somers, himself, who was the only one of the party that wore nankeen, and whose hair was of a deep black. On the supposition that the proofs of the grape-shot wounds actually existed, it has been conjectured that, as the ketch advanced, she was fired into with grape, most of her people shot down, and that the magazine was touched off by the two whose bodies were found in the wreck, and who were probably below when the Intrepid exploded.

That a close fire was opened when the ketch appeared, is beyond doubt, and that she was quite near the mole and crown batteries when the explosion occurred, is known, not only by means of the glass, but by the parts of the wreck that fell on the rocks. Indeed, the situation of the latter would give reason to suppose there might be some truth in the rumour that she had grounded, in which case her destruction by means of shot would have been rendered certain.

The prevalent opinion that the Intrepid was boarded by one or more of the gun-boats that lay near the entrance, would seem to have been entertained without sufficient proof. These vessels lay some distance within the spot where the ketch blew up, and it was not probable that they would have advanced to meet a vessel entering the harbour; for did they suppose her a friend, there would have been no motive, and did they suppose her an enemy, they would have been much more likely to avoid her. So shy, indeed, had the

* It is possible certainly that this mark may have been observed, but it is more probable that the hair would have been consumed. Still a hat may have saved it.

Tripolitans become, after the burning of the Philadelphia, and the boarding of their boats, that it was found extremely difficult to get their small vessels within the range of musket balls. Captain Somers was known to have felt no apprehensions of being boarded by these three boats, for, when cautioned by his friend Decatur on that head, his answer was, " they will be more likely to cut and run." In this opinion, that cool and observant officer was probably right. Had there been any vessel near the Intrepid when she blew up, the light of the explosion would have permitted her, also, to be seen; some portions of her wreck would have been visible next day; and her masts and sails would probably have been flying in the air, as well as those of the ketch.

But the fact that only thirteen bodies are spoken of, in the private journal of Captain Bainbridge, is almost conclusive on the subject that no Tripolitan vessel was blown up on this occasion. This entry was made at the time, and before the nature of the expedition, or the number of those who had been sent in the ketch were known to the Americans in Tripoli. The thirteen bodies account exactly for all on board, and as they came ashore in a most mutilated state, without clothes, in some instances without legs, arms, or heads, it was impossible to say whether they were the mangled remains of friends, or enemies. Had a Tripolitan blown up in company, there must have been many more bodies in the same state, instead of the precise number mentioned, and Captain Bainbridge would have been as likely to be taken to see a dead Turk, as to see a dead American.

The missing gun-boat of which Commodore Preble speaks in his report, may have been sunk by a falling

shell; she may have been shattered and hauled into the galley-mole, out of sight; or, she may have removed in the darkness, and been confounded next morning with others of the flotilla. Observations made, by means of glasses, in a crowded port, at a distance of two or three miles, are liable to many errors. In short, it would seem to be the better opinion, that, from some untoward circumstance, the Intrepid exploded at a point where she did little, or no injury, to the enemy *.

One of three things seems to be highly probable, concerning this long disputed point. The ketch has either exploded by means of the enemy's shot, than

* The entry in the private journal of Captain Bainbridge is as follows:—"Was informed that the explosion that we heard last "night proceeded from a vessel (which the Americans attempted to "send into the harbour,) blowing up; which unfortunate scheme "did no damage whatever to the Tripolitans; nor did it even appear "to heave them into confusion." "On the 8th, by the bashaw's "permission, with Lieutenant ——, went to the beach of the har- "bour, and there saw six persons in a most mangled and burnt "condition, lying on the shore; whom we supposed to have been "part of the unfortunate crew of the fire-vessel, the bottom of which "grounded on the north side of the rocks near the round battery. "Two of these distressed looking objects were fished out of the "wreck. From the whole of them being so much disfigured, it "was impossible to recognise any known feature to us, or even to "distinguish an officer from a seaman. ——— who accompanied "us, informed me that he saw six others yesterday, on the shore to "the southward, which were supposed to have come from the same "vessel. He also informed me that an American six-oared boat, "with one man in her, was found drifted on the beach to the "westward."

On the subject of Commodore Preble's impressions of the fate of the Intrepid, it may be well to say, that the Constitution left Tripoli soon after the ketch was blown up, and that his letter was dated at Malta, September 18th. Owing to this circumstance, he must necessarily have been ignorant of facts that were subsequently ascertained.

which nothing was easier in the situation where she lay; the men have accidentally fired the magazine, while preparing to light the splinters below; or it has been done intentionally, in consequence of the desperate condition to which the party was reduced, by the destruction caused by grape. Of the three, after weighing all the circumstances, it is natural to believe that the first was the most probable, as it was certainly easier to cause a vessel like the Intrepid, with a hundred barrels of loose powder in her magazine, to explode by means of shot, than to cause a vessel like No. 8, which is known to have been blown up, in this manner, in the action of the 7th of August. As regards the grape-shot wounds, it will be seen that Captain Bainbridge is silent.

A sad and solemn mystery, after all our conjectures, must for ever veil the fate of these fearless officers and their hardy followers. In whatever light we view the affair, they were the victims of that self-devotion which causes the seaman and soldier, to hold his life in his hand, when the honour or interest of his country demands the sacrifice. The name of Somers has passed into a battle-cry in the American marine, while those of Wadsworth and Israel are associated with all that can ennoble intrepidity, coolness and daring.

The war, in one sense, terminated with this scene of sublime destruction. Commodore Preble had consumed so much of his powder, in the previous attacks, that it was no longer in his power to cannonade; and the season was fast getting to be dangerous to remain on that exposed coast. The guns, mortars, shells, &c., were taken out of the small vessels, on account of the appearance of the weather, the day after the loss of the

Intrepid, and on the 7th, the John Adams, Siren, Nautilus, Enterprise and Scourge, were directed to take the bombards and gun-boats in tow, and to proceed to Syracuse; while the Constitution, with the Argus and Vixen in company, maintained the blockade. It is not known that another shot was fired at Tripoli.

Three days later, or on the 10th of September, 1804, the President, 44, wearing the broad pennant of Com. Barron, hove in sight, with the Constellation, 38, Captain Campbell, in company, when the command was regularly transferred to the former officer. On the 12th, two sail were cut off, while attempting to enter Tripoli, loaded with wheat. On the 17th, the Constitution reached Malta, with the two prizes; and subsequently, Commodore Preble went to Syracuse in the Argus. At a later day, he came home in the John Adams, where he arrived on the 26th of February, 1805. In the mean time, Captain Decatur proceeded to Malta and took command of the Constitution, which was the first frigate this celebrated officer ever had under his orders.

The country fully appreciated the services of Commodore Preble. He had united caution and daring in a way to denote the highest military qualities; and his success, in general, had been in proportion. The attack of the Intrepid, the only material failure in any of his enterprises, was well arranged, and had it succeeded, it would probably have produced peace in twenty-four hours. As it was, the bashaw was well enough disposed to treat, though he seems to have entered into some calculations in the way of money, that induced him to hope the Americans would still reduce their policy to the level of his own, and prefer

paying ransom, to maintaining cruisers so far from home. Commodore Preble, and all the officers and men under his orders, received the thanks of congress, and a gold medal was bestowed on the former. By the same resolution, congress expressed the sympathy of the nation, in behalf of the relatives of Captain Richard Somers *, Lieutenants Henry Wadsworth, James De-

* Very little is known of Captain Somers, beyond his professional career. He was born in Cape May county, New Jersey; and was the son of Colonel Somers, an officer of the Revolution. He went early to sea, and had commanded a small vessel, even previously to the formation of the navy in 1798. His first cruise was in the United States, under Com. Barry; and he appears early to have attracted attention by his seamanship, zeal and chivalry. Decatur was his messmate, and both having been at sea previously to joining the navy, they were made lieutenants at the same time, the commission of Somers having been dated the 2nd, and that of his friend on the 3rd of June, 1799. The reader will better understand the tie which united the young commanders that served under Preble before Tripoli, when he finds that Stewart was the first lieutenant of the United States at this time, Somers the third, and Decatur the fourth. After the French war, Mr. Somers served in the Boston, 28, Captain M'Niell, and made the singular cruise to which there has been allusion in the text. He was the officer first appointed to command the Nautilus when she was launched, and continued in that station until the time of his death.

Captain Somers was a warm-hearted friend, amiable and mild in his ordinary associations, a trained seaman, and a good officer. His loss was regretted by all who knew him, and, for a time, it cast a gloom over the little service of which he was so conspicuous and favourite a member. There existed a close intimacy between Decatur and Somers, though, in many respects, their characters were unlike. In a chivalrous love of enterprise, a perfect disregard of danger, and in devotion to the honour of the flag, however, they had but one heart; and a generous emulation urged both to renewed exertions, in the peculiar stations in which they had been placed by their commander.

While serving on the Mediterranean station, Mr. Somers, accompanied by two other officers, was walking in the dusk of the evening, a short distance from Syracuse, when five Sicilian soldiers made an assault on them with drawn swords, the intention being to rob. There was one dirk among the Americans, and no other arms. The

catur, James R. Caldwell, and Joseph Israel; and Mr. John Sword Dorsey, midshipman; the officers killed off Tripoli.

officer who had this weapon, soon disposed of his assailant, but Mr. Somers was compelled to seize the sword of the soldier who attacked him, and to close. In doing so, he was badly wounded in the hand, but he succeeded in disarming the assassin, plunged the weapon into his body, when the other three Sicilians fled. The two dead bodies were carried into the town and recognised, but their comrades were never discovered.

CHAPTER VI.

Squadron in the Mediterranean—Blockade of Tripoli—Successful expedition against Derne in conjunction with Hamet Caramalli—Commodore Barron—Command of the squadron transferred to Captain John Rodgers—Gun-boats—British aggression—Negociations for peace with Tripoli—Effect of the war on the American navy.

THE squadron left in the Mediterranean, under the orders of Com. Barron, after the departure of Com. Preble, was much the strongest force that the country had then assembled in that sea. It was, indeed the strongest force that had ever been collected under the orders of any single officer beneath the American flag; and small as it was, in efficiency it was probably more than equal to all the active vessels employed at any one period of the war of the Revolution. Keeping this fact in view, we look back with surprise, at what might then be deemed the greatest effort of a country that possessed 1,000,000 tons of shipping in its mercantile marine, and which, with diminished duties, derived an income of $11,098,565, from its imports alone. The force in question, consisted of the following vessels, *viz.*—

President,	44,	Captain Cox; Com. Barron.
Constitution,	44,	" Decatur.
Congress,	38,	" Rodgers.
Constellation,	38,	" Campbell.
Essex,	32,	" J. Barron.
Siren,	16,	" Stewart.

Argus,	16,	Captain Hull.
Vixen,	12,	" Smith.
Enterprise,	12,	Lieutenant Com. Robinson.
Nautilus,	12,	" Com. Dent.

The Scourge, 14, went home about this time, and was sold out of service, and the bombards and gun-boats borrowed from Naples, as a matter of course, were returned to that government. The Americans, however, retained the two prizes taken from the Tripolitans. The John Adams, 28, Captain Chauncey, also returned to the station, shortly after landing Commodore Preble in New York; and two vessels were purchased, one at Trieste, and the other at Malta, to be converted into bombards. They were never used in that capacity, however, two arriving from America before the season for action had returned. The vessel purchased at Malta, was converted into a sloop, armed and manned, and put under the command of Lieutenant Evans. She was called the Hornet.

The long delay in the appearance of the reinforcement, appears to have been owing to some of those intrigues among the Barbary powers, which it has been found, has always induced them to co-operate in this if in no other manner, whenever there was a war with the Christians. Com. Barron was met at the Straits by rumours of the bad disposition of the Emperor of Morocco, and he found it necessary to employ part of his force in that quarter, in order to overawe the Moors. When he went aloft, the Essex was left below, and a cruiser or two appears to have been kept constantly on the lower station, throughout the winter..

The blockade of Tripoli was maintained by different vessels, during the bad season of 1804–5; but no attack was attempted, although preparations were made

to renew the war in the spring. One of the first measures of Commodore Preble, on reaching America, was to urge upon the government the necessity of building suitable bomb-ketches, and a few gun-boats fitted to cannonade a place like Tripoli. His advice was followed, the vessels being immediately laid down, but it being found impossible to have the ketches ready in time, the two vessels before mentioned, were purchased, strengthened, and equipped as bombards.

In November, Captain Rodgers, as the senior officer, was put in command of the Constitution, while Captain Decatur was transferred to the Congress. The winter and spring passed in this manner, the blockade being maintained with vigour, most of the time, though no event worthy of note, occurred off the port. While matters remained in this state with the ships, a movement by land was in the course of execution, that must now be recorded, as it is intimately connected with the history of the war.

It has been said already, that Jussuf Caramalli, the reigning pacha, or bashaw of Tripoli, was a usurper, having deposed his elder brother Hamet, in order to obtain the throne. The latter had escaped from the regency, and after passing a wandering life, he had taken refuge among the Mamelukes of Egypt. It had often been suggested to the American agents, that the deposed prince might be made useful in carrying on the war against the usurper, and at different times, several projects had been entertained to that effect, though never with any results. At length, Mr. Eaton, the consul at Algiers, who had been a captain in the army, interested himself in the enterprise; and coming to America, he so far prevailed on the government to lend itself to his views, as to obtain a species of indirect

support. Com. Barron was directed to co-operate with Mr. Eaton, as far as he might deem it discreet.

When the new squadron arrived out, it was accordingly ascertained where the ex-bashaw was to be found, and Mr. Eaton at once commenced his operations. Two or three days after Com. Barron had assumed the command before Tripoli, he sent the Argus, 16, Captain Hull, with that gentleman to Alexandria, where he arrived on the 26th of November. On the 29th, Mr. Eaton, accompanied by Lieutenant O'Bannon, of the marines, and Messrs. Mann and Danielson, two midshipmen of the squadron, proceeded to Rosetta, and thence to Cairo. The viceroy of Egypt received them with favour, and permission was obtained for the prince of Tripoli to pass out of the country unmolested, though he had been fighting against the government, with the discontented Mamelukes.

As soon as Hamet Caramalli received the proposals of Mr. Eaton, he separated himself from the Mamelukes, attended by about forty followers, and repaired to a point twelve leagues to the westward of the old port of Alexandria. Here he was soon joined by Mr. Eaton, at the head of a small troop of adventurers, whom he had obtained in Egypt. This party was composed of all nations, though Mr. Eaton expressed his belief, at the time, that, had he possessed the means of subsistence, he might have marched a body of 30,000 men against Tripoli, the reigning bashaw having forced so many of his subjects into banishment. Soon after the junction agreed upon, Mr. Eaton, who now assumed the title of general, marched in the direction of Derne, taking the route across the Desert of Barca. This was early in 1805.

The Argus had returned to Malta for orders and

stores, and on the 2nd of April, she re-appeared off Bomba, with the Hornet, 10, Lieutenant Com. Evans, in company. Cruising on this coast a few days, without obtaining any intelligence of General Eaton and the bashaw, Captain Hull steered to the westward, and, a few leagues to the eastward of Derne, he fell in with the Nautilus, Lieutenant Com. Dent. On communicating with this vessel, which was lying close in with the shore, Captain Hull ascertained that the expedition was on the coast, and that it waited only for the arms and supplies that had been brought to attack Derne, from which town it was but a league distant. A field-piece was landed, together with some stores and muskets, and a few marines appear to have been put under the orders of Mr. O'Bannon, of the corps, when the vessels took their stations to aid in the attack.

It was 2, p. m., on the 27th of April, 1805, that this assault, so novel for Americans to be engaged in, in the other hemisphere, was commenced. The Hornet, Lieutenant Com. Evans, having run close in, and anchored with springs on her cables, within pistol-shot of a battery of eight guns, opened her fire. The Nautilus lay at a little distance to the eastward, and the Argus still further in the same direction, the two latter firing on the town and battery. In about an hour the enemy were driven from the work, when all the vessels directed their guns at the beach, to clear the way for the advance of the party on shore. The enemy made an irregular, but spirited defence, keeping up a heavy fire of musketry, as the assailants advanced, from behind houses and walls. At half-past three, however, Lieutenant O'Bannon and Mr. Mann stormed the principal work, hauling down the Tripolitan ensign,

and, for the first time in the history of the country, hoisting that of the republic on a fortress of the old world. The enemy were driven out of this work with so much precipitation, that they left its guns loaded, and even primed. The cannon were immediately turned upon the town, and Hamet Caramalli having made a lodgment on the other side, so as to bring the enemy between two fires, the place submitted. At four o'clock, the boats of the vessels landed with ammunition for the guns, and to bring off the wounded, Derne being completely in possession of the assailants.

In this affair, only 14 of the assailants were killed and wounded, General Eaton being among the latter. The attack was made by about 1200 men, while the place was supposed to be defended by three or four thousand. One or two attempts were made by the Tripolitans, to regain possession, but they were easily repulsed, and, on one occasion, with some loss. The deposed bashaw remained in possession of the town, and his authority was partially recognised in the province. General Eaton now earnestly pressed Com. Barron for further supplies and reinforcements, with a view to march on Tripoli; but they were denied, on the ground that Hamet Caramalli was put in possession of the second province of the regency, and if he had the influence that he pretended to, he ought to be able to effect his object by means of the ordinary co-operation of the squadron.

This decision of Com. Barron was the subject of much political and military criticism at the time, that officer having been censured for not sustaining a successful partisan, who certainly promised to terminate the war in a manner much beyond the most sanguine hopes of the country. It is not easy to decide on the

merits or demerits of measures of this nature, without being in possession of all the distinctive facts that must govern every enterprise, and it is proper to abstain from venturing an opinion that might not be entertained at all, when intimately acquainted with circumstances. The nature of the fighting at Derne shows that little had as yet been overcome, and, as the force of the reigning bashaw was known to be not less than 20,000 men, in some measure inured to war, it would have been the height of imprudence to have advanced against the capital, at the head of the insignificant and ill-organized force that was collected at Derne. On the other hand, did it appear, that by merely supplying arms and ammunition, with hospital stores and other military supplies, a column of force could have been marched in front of Tripoli, with reasonable hopes of obtaining a support from the population, there would have been an error in judgment in denying the request. Whatever may have been the true character of the decision taken, however, Com. Barron would seem to have had but little concern with it, as that excellent officer and highly respectable gentleman was in extreme ill-health at the time, with but faint hopes of recovery, and on the 22nd of May, he formally transferred the command of the squadron in the Mediterranean, as well as of the vessels expected, to Captain John Rodgers, the officer next in rank to himself. The entire force, under this new disposition, when the vessels known to be about to sail should arrive, would be as follows:

Constitution,	44,	Com. Rodgers.
President,	44,	Captain Cox.
Constellation,	38,	" Campbell,
Congress,	38,	" Decatur.

	Essex,	32,	Capt.	J. Barron.
	John Adams,	28,	"	Chauncey.
	Siren,	16,	"	Stewart.
	Argus,	16,	"	Hull.
	Vixen,	12,	"	Smith.
	Nautilus,	12,	Lieut. Com.	Dent.
	Enterprise,	12,	"	Robinson.
	Hornet,	12,	"	Evans.
Bombs	Vengeance,		Lieut.	Lewis.
	Spitfire,		"	M'Nicll.
Gun-boats	No. 2,	1 gun,	"	Izard.
	3,	2 "	"	Maxwell.
	4,	2 "	"	J. D. Henley.
	5,	2 "	"	Harrison.
	6,	2 "	"	Lawrence.
	8,	2 "	"	Harraden.
	9,	2 "	"	Elbert.
	10,	2 "	"	Carter.
	11,	1 "	"	———
	12,	1 "	"	———

The bombards mentioned in the foregoing list, were the two vessels purchased in America and fitted for the purpose; and gun-boats Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10, were large of their class, having been regularly and carefully constructed at home. They were long, low, narrow vessels, principally sloop-rigged, and most of them mounted two heavy thirty-two-pounders, one at each end. As they were ready to sail in the mild season, it was thought, by putting their guns below, they might be carried across the Atlantic, although their gunwales, when the vessels were ready for service, were scarcely two feet from the water. They sailed at different times, and all arrived safely but one. No. 7, Lieutenant Ogilvie, sailed May 14, 1805, but springing her mast, she returned to New York to refit. She sailed a second time, June the 20th, and was never heard of afterwards. No. 7, made the fourth American

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cruiser that had thus disappeared within thirty years*. It is worthy of remark, that the remaining eight boats arrived at Syracuse within forty-eight hours of each other. Lieutenant James Lawrence took No. 6 to the Mediterranean, arriving safely. When near the Western Islands, he fell in with the British frigate Lapwing, 28, Captain Upton, which ran for him, under the impression that the gun-boat was some wrecked mariners on a raft, there being a great show of canvass, and apparently no hull. On the 12th of June, No. 7 fell in with the fleet of Admiral Collingwood, off Cadiz, and while Mr. Lawrence was on board one of the British ships, a boat was sent and took three men out of No. 7, under the pretence that they were Englishmen. On his return to his own vessel, Mr. Lawrence hauled down his ensign, but no notice was taken of the proceeding by the British. It is a fitting commentary on this transaction, that, in the published letters of Lord Collingwood, where he speaks of the impressment of Americans, he says that England would not submit to such an aggression for an hour! Shortly after assuming the command, Com. Rodgers transferred Captain J. Barron from the Essex, 32, to the President, 44, giving the former ship to Captain Cox, who was only a master and commander.

Negociations for peace now commenced in earnest, Mr. Lear having arrived off Tripoli, for that purpose, in the Essex, Captain Barron. After the usual intrigues, delays, and prevarications, a treaty was signed on the 3rd of June, 1805. By this treaty, no tribute was to be paid in future, but $60,000 were given by America for the ransom of the remaining prisoners,

* Saratoga, 16, l'Insurgente, 36, Pickering, 14, and No. 7.

after exchanging the Tripolitans in her power, man for man.

It is not easy to express approbation of the terms of this treaty of peace. America had been contending for the usages of civilization, and the rights of nations, and the ransom was a direct abandonment of both. When we remember the force that was about to assemble before Tripoli, the season of the year, the fact that Derne was occupied by Hamet Caramalli, and the disposition that so generally prevailed in the squadron to renew the attacks on the enemy, we find it difficult to believe that better terms might not have been obtained. How far the course of the negociator was compelled by his instructions, we have no means of saying, but the treaty was approved and ratified. While many condemned it as unwise, all, however, rejoiced that it was the means of restoring so many brave men to their country. It is no more than liberal, moreover, to believe that the situation of these unfortunate officers and men, had a deep influence in inducing the government to forego abstract considerations, with a view to their relief.

Thus terminated the war with Tripoli, after an existence of four years. It is probable that the United States would have retained in service some officers, and would have kept up a small force, had not this contest occurred, but its influence on the fortunes and character of the navy is incalculable. It saved the first, in a degree at least, and it may be said to have formed the last. Perhaps no service, either in the way of ships or officers, ever had so large a proportion of what was excellent in it, and so small a proportion of that which was defective, as the navy of the United States, the day peace was signed with Tripoli. A stern discipline, a

high moral tone, rare models in seamanship, active warfare, the means of comparison, and a spirit of emulation that is certain to carry the national character to the highest level, whenever the national energies can be permitted to exhibit themselves, had conspired to produce this end. The petulant and always questionable proofs of private rencontres, which are so apt to sully the renown of infant services, had disappeared in a chivalry that seemed to have forgotten all but the country and her honour. Not a duel was fought during the command of Preble; the brave men assembled under his orders, regarded each other as brothers, and the honour of one appeared to be connected with the honour of all. An admirable *esprit de corps* was created, and the button, which bore the emblem of the common profession, was deemed a signal of the presence of a friend. Men had stood by each other in moments of severe trial, and even the body of the nation, which is so little addicted to the sentimental or the abstract, began to regard the flag with open pride. In a word, the tone, discipline, pride, emulation, and spirit, that the navy derived from this remote and, in one sense, unimportant war, prepared it for another and a severer trial that was at hand. The impression produced in the Mediterranean was also favourable, and the head of the Romish church is said to have publicly declared, that America had done more for christendom, against the barbarians, than all the powers of Europe united.

CHAPTER VII.

Correspondence with the Bey of Tunis—Hostilities threatened—Settlement of the dispute—New list of officers—Short-sighted policy of Congress—Law for the construction of gun-boats—English doctrines relative to blockades and the colonial trade—Outrage by the British Ship, Leander—The Chesapeake ordered to be put into commission—Alleged deserters from his B. M. ship Melampus—Attack on the Chesapeake by the Leopard—Courts martial on Com. Barron, Captain Gordon, and Captain Hall—Vice-Admiral Berkeley recalled from the American station.

PEACE was no sooner made with Tripoli, than Com. Rodgers gave his attention to Tunis, with which regency there was now every prospect of a speedy war. In April, while blockading, the Constitution had captured a xebec belonging to the Bey, which, in company with two prizes, was endeavouring to get into Tripoli. These vessels had been demanded, and the consul had been notified that hostilities would immediately follow a refusal. Mr. Davis, who was then at Tunis, informed the Bey that the captured vessels could not be released, and the whole matter was referred to the naval officer in command. A correspondence ensued, and Com. Rodgers felt himself not only compelled, but, without forgetting prudence, able to tell the government of Tunis, that it was his settled intention to maintain the rights of his flag, and the law of nations.

When this reply was received at Tunis, the Bey, who

was not yet accustomed to consider America a nation of importance, and who appeared to think that his anger must be a source of serious apprehension to her people, used the loftiest language, expressly announcing an intention to commence hostilities unless the vessels were instantly restored. But times had changed. The temporary control of events had been taken out of the hands of timid politicians in another hemisphere, and had passed into those of men who desired nothing better than to teach barbarians justice. The American merchant ships had ceased to apprehend capture, and the idea, which had just before been so terrible, that of a rover's getting into the Atlantic, appears to have been forgotten. In short, a very moderate application of that dormant power, which, when properly applied, can at any time give the republic a commanding influence in the general concerns of the world, had at least disposed of all questions of this nature, that were connected with states as insignificant as those of Barbary. The Bey of Tunis, moreover, had selected a most unfortunate moment for his bravado, the force under Com. Rodgers being, at the time, nearly all in the Mediterranean. The gun-boats had arrived, and the ketches were hourly expected. In short, the menace was most inopportunely made for the Bey, since it was uttered to those, who would not have regretted an attempt to put it in execution.

The business at Tripoli was no sooner completed, therefore, than Com. Rodgers sailed with thirteen vessels, gun-boats included, and anchored in Tunis Bay on the 1st of August. As soon as the consul had repaired on board, and communicated the state of things in the regency, a council of war was called. The result was a letter to the Bey, demanding to know if a

declaration he had made to the consul, in which he had said that the appearance of the American squadron off his port would be considered as the commencement of hostilities, was to be taken literally, or not. In this letter the Bey was given to understand, in the plainest manner, that hostilities would commence on the part of the Americans, within thirty-six hours, did he decline answering, or neglect the application.

It may be useful to the reader, if we pause a moment, and review the changes that four short years had produced in the tone of the American agents. In 1801, after capturing a Tripolitan rover, Com. Dale had been compelled to send her into her own port, through the doubts and misgivings of a feeble and temporizing policy at home. The administration had used the cry of economy as a means of defeating its adversaries, and, as is too often the case, this appeal had been made without a just discrimination between that liberal saving, which anticipates future waste by present expenditure, and that which can be no better described than by the homely axiom "of penny wise and pound foolish." But the force of things, always a salutary corrective of the errors of men, had compelled an armament, and no better illustration of the expediency of being prepared for war need be required, than is to be found in the facts of this case.

The Bey, accustomed to regard the Americans as tributaries, had been seeking a cause for war, when he was suddenly met by this high tone on the part of those whom he had hitherto found so much disposed to temporize. At first he appeared to place no faith in the demonstration, and the required answer was not immediately sent. Com. Rodgers, in consequence, directed Captain Decatur to land, to demand an

audience of the Bey, and to obtain an unequivocal solution of the question of peace or war.

It is probable that the Bey regarded this mission as one of a doubtful nature also, for he refused to receive Captain Decatur in the character in which he had been sent. That spirited officer, little accustomed to temporizing, declined being admitted in any other. As soon as the intentions of both parties had been explained, Captain Decatur returned on board, when "the royal breast" of the Bey "appeared to be panic struck." A letter was sent to the commodore, signed by the pacha himself, in which he expressed a desire to treat, and using the most pacific language. Shortly after he announced a wish to send a minister to Washington. This moderated tone put an end to the threatened hostilities, and after a negociation that lasted nearly a month, the affair was arranged with the regency, to the satisfaction of one of the parties at least. The xebec and her prizes were not given up. In September, a Tunisian ambassador embarked in the Congress, 38, Captain Decatur, and in due time, he was landed in Washington.

Com. Rodgers remained in Tunis Bay more than a month, literally negociating under the muzzles of his guns, and the result proved the wisdom of the course he had taken. The navy, the ablest of all negociators in such matters, had completely reversed the ancient order of things, for, instead of an American agent's being compelled to solicit the restoration of prizes illegally taken in Africa, an African agent was now soliciting the restoration of prizes legally captured in America. At a later day, the xebec and her consorts were given up as of no moment; but when the Tunisian minister added a demand for tribute, agreeably to

former usage, he met with an explicit denial. After a short residence, he returned to his master with the latter answer, but the Bey did not see fit to take any steps in consequence. The impression made by the attacks on Tripoli, and of the appearance of the American squadron before his own town, would seem to have been lasting.

After the settlement of the dispute with Tunis, the vessels in the Mediterranean were gradually reduced, though it was still deemed necessary to keep a small squadron in that sea. The government also became better apprised of the nature of the force that was required, in carrying on a war with the Barbary states, and several new vessels were put into the water about this time, among which were two regularly constructed bombards, the Etna and the Vesuvius. Two sloops of war, of the most approved models, were also built, and became active cruisers on the peace establishment. These vessels were the Wasp, 18; and the Hornet, 18; the former being a ship, and the latter a brig. These two beautiful and efficient sloops had no gun-decks, poops, or top-gallant forecastles, but were constructed after the designs of the French, and they had armaments of 16 thirty-two pound carronades, and 2 long twelves each.

In April 1806, a law was passed, which authorised the president to employ as many of the public vessels as he might deem necessary, but limiting the number of the officers and seamen. By this act the list of the captains was increased to 13, that of the masters and commanders to 9, and that of the lieutenants to 72. The rank of masters and commanders was re-established in 1804, as has been already shown, and, of the 36 lieutenants retained in 1801, 15 had been promoted,

13 had resigned, 1 had died on service, 1 had been drowned on service, 1 had been killed in battle, 1 had been killed in a duel, 1 had been dismissed, and 3 still remained on the list of lieutenants. Of those that had been promoted, 1* had resigned, and 1† had been killed in battle. It follows that, in order to complete the new list to 72, 69 midshipmen were raised to the rank of lieutenants.

The list of captains, under the new law, and after the changes just named, consisted of the following gentlemen, *viz.* :—

1 Samuel Nicholson,	8 Hugh G. Campbell,
2 Alexander Murray,	9 Stephen Decatur,
3 Samuel Barron,	10 Thomas Dingey,
4 John Rodgers,	11 Charles Stewart,
5 Edward Preble,	12 Isaac Hull,
6 James Barron,	13 John Shaw,
7 William Bainbridge,	14 Isaac Chauncey.

The list of masters and commanders at the same period, was as follows, *viz.* :—

1 John Smith,	5 David Porter,
2 George Cox,	6 John Cassin,
3 John H. Dent,	7 Samuel Evans,
4 Thomas Robinson,	8 Charles Gordon.

The condition of the navy may be said to have been negative at the period of which we are now writing, for while all who reflected seriously on the subject, felt the necessity of greatly increasing this branch of the national defence, nothing efficient was attempted, or, apparently, contemplated. Ships of the line, without which it would be impossible to prevent any of even the secondary maritime states of Europe from block-

* Sterrett. † Somers.

ading the ports of the country were now scarcely mentioned, and the materials that had been collected for that object in 1800, were rapidly disappearing for the purposes of repairs and re-constructions. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine a policy as short-sighted and feeble as that pursued by Congress at this particular juncture. With political relations that were never free from the appearances of hostilities, a trade that covered all the seas of the known world, and an experience that was replete with lessons on the necessity of repelling outrages by force, this great interest was treated with a neglect that approached fatuity. To add to this oversight, and to increase the despondency of the service, as well as of all those whose views extended to the future necessities of the country, the government appears to have adopted a policy, in connexion with the defence of the harbours, bays, and sounds of the coast, that was singularly adapted to breaking down the high tone that the navy had acquired in its recent experience. This plan, which has been generally known as the " gun-boat policy," originated as far back as the year 1803, though it did not become of sufficient moment to be particularly noticed until the time at which we are now arrived, in the regular order of events.

In February 1803, the relations of the country with Spain, in consequence of a denial of a place of deposit at New Orleans, had an aspect so threatening, that a law was passed appropriating $50,000 for the construction of gun-boats. In consequence of the acquisition of Louisiana, by treaty, however, this money was never used, although steps had been taken to procure models of the gun-boats of Spain and Naples, nations whose naval histories, for the previous century, offered but

questionable examples for the imitation of a people as singularly maritime as those of America.

In 1804, gun-boats were obtained from Naples to cannonade Tripoli, the position of the rocks before that town admitting of their use, under circumstances of advantage. The Neapolitan boats proving defective, a few were built at home, and this species of vessel first appeared afloat in 1805. The hardy manner in which they were carried across the ocean and returned, has already been mentioned. The law under which these boats had been built, contemplated their future use, as an auxiliary means of permanent harbour defence.

Motives had been gradually accumulating, however, to induce the executive to extend this policy. The English had set up new doctrines on the subject of blockades and the colonial trade, in opposition to doctrines of France, that were equally opposed to common sense, obvious justice, and usage; and, as the former possessed a numerous and active marine, these conflicting practices resulted in a species of indirect and half-way blockade of the entire American coast. English cruisers were constantly hovering around the most frequented of the ports of the country, while privateers, under French commissions, were occasionally guilty of the grossest excesses. In short, we have now reached the commencement of that extraordinary state of things, when each of the great European belligerents appeared to think that an act of aggression by its enemy on a neutral, was an ample justification for retaliating on the unoffending and suffering party.

The gun-boats, at first, were well received into the service, since it gave enterprising young officers commands; and the vessels originally constructed, were of

an equipment, size and force, which, in a measure, removed the objections that young sea-officers would be apt to urge against serving in them. At the close of the year 1806, the president announced to Congress that the gun-boats already authorised by a law of April of the same year, fifty in number, were so far advanced as to put it in the power of the government to employ them all, the succeeding season, and the message contained a recommendation to extend the system.

An event soon occurred that not only stimulated this policy, but which induced the government to resort to new measures to protect the country, some of which were as questionable, as they were novel. A few ships had been kept in the Mediterranean, as stated, and it is worthy of being noted, that, with a commerce that, in 1807, employed 1,200,000 tons of shipping, this was the only foreign station on which an American cruiser was ever seen! Neither was there any proper home-squadron, notwithstanding the constant complaints that were made of the wrongs inflicted by English and French cruisers, particularly the former, at the very mouths of the harbours of the country.

On the 25th of April, 1806, the British ship Leander, 50, Captain Whitby, in endeavouring to cut off a small coaster, that was running for Sandy Hook, fired a shot into her, which killed one of her people; and as this outrage occurred quite near the shore, it excited a strong feeling of indignation, in a portion of the country at least. But, unfortunately, party spirit had at that period taken the worst, most dangerous, and least creditable form, in which it can exist in any free country. By neglecting to place the republic in

an attitude to command respect, the government had unavoidably been reduced to appeal to arguments and principles, in those cases in which an appeal to force is the only preservative of national rights, and in so doing it opened the door to the admission of sophisms, counter-arguments, and discussions, that, in the end, effectually arrayed one half of the community against the other, and this too, on matters in which foreign nations were the real parties on one side, and the common country on the other. In a word, the great mistake was made of admitting of controversy concerning interests that all wise governments hold to be beyond dispute. There will presently be occasion to advert to some of the consequences of this extraordinary state of things, that are more peculiarly connected with our subject.

While the feelings, policy, and preparations of the United States were in the condition just mentioned, the Chesapeake, 38, was ordered to be put in commission, with a view of sending her to the Mediterranean, as the relief-ship, the time of the people of the Constitution, 44, the flag-ship on that station, being nearly up. Captain Charles Gordon, the youngest master-commandant on the list, was attached to the Chesapeake as her captain, and Captain James Barron was selected to hoist a broad pennant in her, as commander of the squadron. Both these officers enjoyed high characters in the service; Com. Barron, in particular, being deemed one of the most ingenious and ready seamen that America had ever produced.

The Chesapeake was lying at the navy yard Washington, and was put in commission early in 1807. By an order of the date of February 22nd of that year, Captain Gordon was first attached, but the

specific orders to Com. Barron do not appear to have been given until May the 15th. The ship remained at Washington, taking in her masts and stores, and receiving officers and men, until the close of the spring. During this time, the English minister informed the government that three deserters, from His British Majesty's ship Melampus, had enlisted among the crew of the Chesapeake, and he requested that they might be given up. Although the right to demand deserters is not recognised by the laws of nations, there is usually a disposition between friendly governments to aid each other in securing these delinquents, especially when it can be done under circumstances that produce no direct injury, and the matter was referred to Com. Barron, for investigation, by the navy department. The inquiry appears to have been made in a proper temper, and with a sincere wish to dismiss the men, should they actually prove to be what was represented, though it might be questioned whether the president himself legally possessed any power to give them up to their own officers. Com. Barron directed Captain Gordon to inquire into the matter with care, and to make his report. It was ascertained that the three men were actually deserters from the ship named, but they all claimed to be impressed Americans, who had availed themselves of the first opportunity that offered, on landing in their native country, to make their escape from illegal and unjust detention. One of these men was said to be a native of the Eastern Shore, a part of the country in which Captain Gordon was born, and that officer, after a careful examination, appears to have been satisfied with the truth of his account. Another was a coloured man, and there was hardly a doubt of the truth of his alle-

gations; while the case of the third seaman, though in part established, was not entirely clear. Under the circumstances, however, a seaman found in the country, and demanding the protection of its laws as a native, could not be given up to a service that was known constantly to violate the rights of individuals, on the naked demand of that service, and in the absence of all affirmative proof of its being in the right. The English minister received the report, and he appears to have been satisfied, as no more was said on the subject.

Although Captain Gordon was attached to the Chesapeake in February, he does not appear to have actually taken the command of the ship until the 1st of May, as she was still in the hands of the mechanics. About the beginning of June, she sailed from Washington for Norfolk. At this time, there were but twelve guns on board; and, as it is customary for all vessels of war to fire a salute in passing Mount Vernon, it was discovered, on that occasion, that some of the equipments of the guns were imperfect. Orders were issued by Captain Gordon in consequence, though the circumstance probably excited less attention than would otherwise have been the case, on account of the unfinished state of the vessel. The Chesapeake arrived in Hampton Roads on the 4th of June, and on the 6th, Com. Barron paid her a short visit.

Between the 6th of June and the 19th, the remainder of the guns and stores were received on board the Chesapeake, her crew was completed to about 375 souls, and, on the latter day, Captain Gordon reported her to Com. Barron as ready for sea. Up to the 6th of June, the people had not even been quartered at all, and between that day and the time of sailing, they had

been at quarters but three times; on neither of which occasions were the guns exercised.

About eight a. m., June 22nd, 1807, the Chesapeake, 38, Capt. Gordon, bearing the broad pennant of Com. Barron, got under weigh, from Hampton Roads, bound to the Mediterranean. At that early day, the armament of the ship consisted of 28 eighteen-pounders on her gun-deck, and of 12 carronades above, making a total of 40 guns. She was a roomy and convenient vessel, but was thought to be weak for her dimensions, and her sailing was remarkable neither way.

A squadron of British ships of war, varying constantly in numbers and vessels, had been watching some French frigates that lay at Annapolis several months; and it was their practice to lie in Lynnhaven, or, occasionally, to cruise in the offing. On the 21st of June, this squadron had consisted of three vessels, one of which was the Bellona, 74, and another the Melampus, 38, the ship from which the three seamen, already mentioned, had deserted. On the evening of the same day, a fourth vessel, which was afterwards ascertained to be the Leopard 50, Captain Humphreys, came in and anchored. The Leopard was a small two-decker, had a lower-deck battery of twenty-fours, and is said to have mounted 56 guns. When the Chesapeake weighed, up at Hampton Roads, the Leopard lifted her anchor, and preceded the American frigate to sea by several miles. The wind was light, at north-west; and as the Leopard got an offing, she disappeared behind Cape Henry.

A little after 12 o'clock, the Chesapeake was up with the cape, when the wind shifted to the southward and eastward. As she opened the offing, the Leopard was seen a few miles distant to windward, heading to the

eastward, with apparently very little air. She soon took the new wind, however, when both ships made stretches to get free of the land, there being a good working breeze and perfectly smooth water. The Leopard tacked with the Chesapeake, though the latter ship appears to have closed with her the distance between the two vessels gradually lessening. By some accounts the English ship shortened sail in order to allow this. Up to this moment, however, it is the better opinion, that there was nothing unusual, or suspicious, in her movements. The British cruisers were in the habit of standing out in this manner, and the Leopard obtained the weather gauge, altogether by the shift of wind.

About 3 o'clock, both vessels having an offing of some six or eight miles, the Chesapeake tacked to the eastward again, and the Leopard, then about a mile to windward, wore round and came down upon her weather quarter, when she hailed, informing Com. Barron that she had a despatch for him. In all this there was nothing unusual, despatches having been put on board the Wasp, 18, Captain Smith, from the Bellona, 74, a few days previously, the American ship being bound to Europe. Com. Barron answered that he would heave to, and receive a boat. Both vessels now came to, the Chesapeake by laying her main-topsail to the mast, while the accounts appear uncertain, whether the Leopard backed her forward or her after sails. At this time, it was observed by some of the officers on board the Chesapeake, however, that the English ship had her lower ports triced up, and the tompions out of her guns. It does not appear that the latter fact, the only one of moment, was reported to either Capt. Gordon, or Com. Barron.

In a few minutes, a boat from the Leopard came

alongside of the Chesapeake, and her officer was shown into the cabin, where he was received by Com. Barron. Here the English lieutenant produced an order, signed by Vice-Admiral Berkeley, dated Halifax, June 1st, and addressed to all the captains of the ships under his command, directing them, should they fall in with the Chesapeake, out of the waters of the United States, and at sea, to show her commander this order, to "require to search for deserters," and "to proceed and search for the same*," offering, at the same time, to allow of a similar search on board their own vessels. Accompanying this order, was a note from the commander of the Leopard, addressed to the commander of the Chesapeake, referring to the order of the vice-admiral, and expressing a hope "that every circumstance respecting them (the deserters) may be adjusted in a manner that the harmony subsisting between the two countries may remain undisturbed." To this note, Com. Barron returned an answer, stating that he knew of no such deserters as described. He added, that his recruiting officers had been particularly instructed by the government, not to enter any deserters from the English ships, and that his orders would not allow him to suffer his people to be mustered by any officers but their own.

By referring to this correspondence, which will be found in the Appendix, it will be seen that neither the order of Vice-Admiral Berkeley, the note of Captain Humphreys, nor the answer of Com. Barron, was perfectly explicit on the important points, of whether force would be used, if the alleged deserters were not given up, or whether they would be refused, could it be shown, by any other means than that of being mustered by

* See note A, at the end of the volume.

foreign officers, that the men required were among the Chesapeake's crew. In a word, the order and note were vague and general; and the answer, as far as it went, the most direct document of the three, appears to have been framed in a similar spirit. The British officer was ordered to "require" of the captain of the Chesapeake, "to search his ship for deserters," &c., and "to proceed and search for the same," &c. Nothing is said of compelling a search; and though the term "require," was a strong one, the whole phraseology of the order was such as might very well raise doubts, under the peculiar circumstances, how far a party, who made professions of a desire to preserve the harmony of the two nations, might feel disposed to violate public law, in order to enforce its object. The note of Captain Humphreys was just as explicit, and just as vague as the order, being a mere echo of its spirit. Com. Barron very clearly refused to permit a British officer to search for a deserter, while he did not touch the general principle, or what he might do, could it be shown by less objectionable means, that there was a British deserter, of the sort mentioned in the order, on board the Chesapeake*, and the demand on the part of the English officers to search in person was abandoned. Had there even existed a clause in the treaty between England and America, rendering it obligatory on the two nations to deliver up each other's deserters, the requisition of Vice-Admiral Berkeley, taken as an order to search in person, would have so far exceeded the probable construction of reason, as to justify an officer in supposing that nothing

* It would have been illegal for Com. Barron to give up a man regularly entered among his crew as a deserter. He might have returned a deserter that came on board his ship, but nothing more.

beyond a little well-managed intimidation was intended, since nations do not usually permit their treaties to be enforced by any but their own agents. While there was something very equivocal, beyond doubt, in the whole procedure of the British, it was so high-handed a measure to commence a demand for deserters, by insisting on a right to search a foreign vessel of war in person, for them, that it would be very difficult to believe any design to enforce a demand so utterly out of the regular course of things, could be seriously entertained. It ought to be added, that the deserters alluded to in the order of Vice-Admiral Berkeley, were not those from the Melampus, already spoken of, but men from other ships, who were supposed to have entered on board the Chesapeake at a much later day*.

The English lieutenant was on board the Chesapeake some time; the accounts of the length of his visit varying from 15 to 45 minutes. It is probable he was fully half an hour in the cabin. His stay appears to have been long enough to excite uneasiness on board his own ship, for while Com. Barron was deliberating on the course he ought to pursue, information was sent below that a signal was flying on board the Leopard, which her officer immediately declared to be an order for the return of the boat. Soon after this signal was shown, the answer of Com. Barron was delivered.

Com. Barron now sent for Captain Gordon, and told him to get the gun-deck clear, a duty that had

* It is said that one man in particular, who had run from the Halifax sloop of war, had been seen by his old captain in Norfolk, and that he had insulted the latter in the street. This was the person the English officers were the most anxious to obtain. It does not appear, however, that any men, but those from the Melampus, had ever been formally demanded of the proper authorities, though something may have passed on the subject between subordinates.

been commenced an hour or two before, without reference to the Leopard. He then went on deck. Soon after the English officer had passed out of the ship into his own boat, by the larboard, or lee-gangway, Com. Barron appeared in the starboard, or weather-gangway, to examine the Leopard. Here it would seem that the latter was forcibly struck with the appearance of preparation on board the English ship, and the idea that recourse might be had to force, began to impress him seriously. He issued an order to Captain Gordon, to hasten the work on the gun-deck, and to go to quarters. In consequence of the latter order, a few taps were beaten on the drum, but that instrument was stopped by directions of Com. Barron, and instructions were given to get the people to their quarters, with as little noise and parade as possible, in order to gain time, if the Leopard really meditated hostilities.

It is not easy to imagine a vessel of war in a more unfortunate situation, than that of the Chesapeake at this particular moment. With a ship of superior force within pistol-shot, on her weather-quarter, her guns trained, matches burning, people drilled, and every thing ready to commence a heavy fire, while she herself was littered and lumbered, with a crew that had not yet exercised her guns, and which had been only three times even mustered at their quarters. The business of coiling away her cables, which had lain on the gun-deck until after 2 o'clock, was still going on while the cabin bulk-head, cabin furniture, and some temporary pantries were all standing aft. A good deal of the baggage of the passengers in the ship, was also on the gun-deck. It would seem, however, that some of the lieutenants had regarded the movements of the Leopard with distrust from the beginning; and the vessel

being particularly well officered, these gentlemen soon made an active commencement towards getting the ship clear. The guns were all loaded and shotted, but on examination, it was found that there was a deficiency in rammers, wads, matches, gun-locks, and powder-horns. While things were in this awkward condition, Com. Barron continued in the gangway, examining the Leopard. The boat of the latter was about five minutes in pulling back to that vessel, and as soon as the people were out of her, she was dropped astern, where most of her boats were towing, and the English ship hailed. Com. Barron answered that he did not understand the hail, when the Leopard fired a shot ahead of the Chesapeake. In a few seconds this shot was followed by an entire broadside. By this discharge, in addition to other injuries done the ship, Com. Barron, who continued in the gangway, and his aide, Mr. Broom, were wounded. The Leopard was now hailed, and some answer was returned, but the noise and confusion rendered all attempts at a communication in this mode useless. A boat was shortly after ordered to be lowered, to be sent to the Leopard, but it did not proceed.

Every exertion was making all the while, to get the batteries ready, and with the exception of the forward gun below, the port of which was still down on account of the anchor, it appears that one broadside might have been fired, had not the means of discharging the guns been absolutely wanting. For some time, there was no priming powder, and when an insufficient quantity did finally arrive, there were no matches, locks, nor loggerheads. Some of the latter were brought from the galley, however, and they were applied to the priming, but were yet too cold to fire the guns. In the

mean while, the Leopard, in an excellent position, and favoured by smooth water, was deliberately pouring in her whole fire upon an unresisting ship. This state of things lasted from twelve to eighteen minutes, when Com. Barron, having repeatedly desired that one gun, at least, might be discharged, ordered the colours to be hauled down. Just as the ensign reached the taffrail, one gun was fired from the second division of the ship*.

The Chesapeake immediately sent a boat on board the Leopard, to say that the ship was at the disposal of the English captain, when the latter directed his officers to muster the American crew. The three men claimed to be deserters from the Melampus, and one that had run from the Halifax sloop of war, were carried away. Com. Barron now sent another note to Captain Humphreys, to state his readiness to give up his ship; but the latter declining to take charge of her, a council of the officers was called, and the Chesapeake returned to Hampton Roads the same evening.

In this affair, the Leopard, of course, suffered very little. The single shot that was fired, it is understood, hulled her, but no person was injured. Not so with the Chesapeake, although the injuries she sustained, were probably less than might have been expected. The accounts of the duration of the firing, vary from seven to twenty minutes, though the majority of opinions place it at about twelve. But three men killed on the spot; eight were badly, and ten were slightly wounded; making a total of twenty-one were casualties. The Leopard appears to have thrown the

* This gun was discharged by means of a coal brought from the galley, which was applied by Lieutenant Allen, the officer of the division, with his fingers, after an unsuccessful attempt to make use of a loggerhead.

weight of her grape into the lower sails, the courses and fore-topmast stay-sail having been riddled with that description of shot. Twenty-one round shot struck the hull. As it is known that the first broadside, when vessels are near and in smooth water, usually does as much injury as several of the succeeding, and as all the firing of the Leopard, in one sense at least, may be said to have possessed this advantage, the execution she did cannot be considered as any thing remarkable. All three of the lower masts of the American frigate were injured, it is true, and a good deal of her rigging was cut; still the impression left by the occurrence, went to convince the American service, that English fire was not so formidable as tradition and rumour had made it.

The attack on the Chesapeake, and its results, created a strong and universal sensation in America. At first, as ever happens while natural feeling and national sentiment are uninfluenced by calculations of policy, there was but one voice of indignation and resentment, though, in a short time, the fiend of party lifted his head, and persons were not wanting who presumed to justify the course taken by the English vice-admiral. Notwithstanding these exceptions, the general effect was certainly very adverse to the British cause in America, and the injury was not fairly forgotten, until it had been effaced from the public mind by many subsequent victories.

It is scarcely necessary to say that wounded national feeling eagerly sought for some palliative, and, as usually happens in such cases, the commanding officer of the Chesapeake soon became the subject of those inconsiderate and unjust comments, which ever accompany popular clamour, when the common self-esteem

is lessened. A court of inquiry sat, as a matter of course, and the results were, courts-martial on Com. Barron, Captain Gordon, Captain Hall, the commanding marine officer on board, and the gunner.

The charges produced against Com. Barron were four, *viz:* 1st. "For negligently performing the duty assigned him." Under this charge the specifications alleged that he had not sufficiently visited and examined the ship, previously to sailing. 2nd. "For neglecting, on the probability of an engagement, to clear his ship for action." There were six specifications under this charge, all tending to the same point. 3rd. "Failing to encourage, in his own person, his inferior officers and men to fight courageously." Ten specifications were made under this charge, all more or less implicating the military judgment and personal courage of the accused. 4. "For not doing his utmost to take or destroy the Leopard, which vessel it was his duty to encounter." Five specifications supported this charge.

There is little question that the government, nation, and we might almost add the navy, felt a predisposition to condemn Com. Barron, previously to the trial, for it is the natural and most common refuge of masses of men, to seek a victim whenever they find themselves in any manner implicated in their characters, or conduct. The court was well composed, and its hearing was solemn and dignified. It has been said that this tribunal first set the example to the service, of a rigid adherence to principles, forms, and precepts in its proceedings, and it has always been spoken of with respect for its impartiality and motives. Of the four charges made, Com. Barron was entirely acquitted of the first, third, and fourth, and found guilty under the second. Several of the specifications of the

other charges were found to be true, but the court decided that they did not involve the guilt implied in the accusations. It was the final decision, that Com. Barron was guilty of the 5th and 6th specifications of the 2nd charge, which were in the following words:— 5th. " In that, the said James Barron did receive from the commanding officer of the Leopard, a communication clearly intimating, that if certain men were not delivered up to him, he should proceed to use force, and still the said James Barron neglected to clear his ship for action." 6th. " In that, the said James Barron did verily believe, from the communication he received from the commanding officer of the said ship Leopard, that the said ship would fire upon the said frigate Chesapeake, or take by force, if they could not be obtained by other means, any British deserters that could be found on board the Chesapeake, and still the said James Barron neglected to clear his ship for action." On these two specifications under the charge of neglect of duty, Com. Barron was sentenced to be suspended for five years, without pay or emoluments.

It may be questioned if the order of Vice-Admiral Berkeley and the note of Captain Humphreys will be thought by all persons to be " communications clearly intimating" an intention to resort to force, under the peculiar circumstances of the case. The first would seem to have been framed with great art, expressing nothing very clearly, and coupled with the fact of its containing instructions to show the order itself to the American captain, it might very well be supposed to have been no more than an expedient ingeniously devised, to obtain the ends of the British officers by intimidation. Had the Chesapeake been prepared for action, for instance, and the English lieutenant being

detained, had Com. Barron, assuming that the order of Admiral Berkeley was an act of hostility, as was assumed, in effect, by the court, attacked and subdued the Leopard, the world would probably have heard the complaints of England for a violation of good faith, under the plea that to "require to search his ship for deserters," with an offer to submit to a similar search on board the British ship, was not necessarily an act of hostility, and that the additional order "to proceed and search for the same," was merely given under the supposition that the demand contained in the requisition would have been amicably granted.

If the testimony fully sustained the 6th specification, there can be no doubt that Com. Barron was guilty of culpable neglect; but it may be thought that this point also admits of some qualification. It appears, by the finding of the court, that it made up its decision on this specification from two facts, *viz.*, expressions in a note accompanying the official report made of the affair by Com. Barron to the navy department, and expressions he had used in conversation prior to the attack. As regards the first, Com. Barron tells the secretary, that the purport of Vice-Admiral Berkeley's order was to take the men by force, in the event of no other means offering, a statement that is certainly not borne out by the order itself, as it has since been given to the world. On his trial, Com. Barron explains this discrepancy between the fact and his own statement, and which appears to have militated so much against his own interests, by saying that he wrote the note after the affair had occurred, under much bodily suffering from wounds, and great mental agitation, and that he must have confounded the impressions left by events, with opinions formed previously to their occurrence.

On examining this part of the subject, it will be seen that the answer is not without much force.

The second fact rests on the testimony of Captain Gordon, who informed the court that, while at dinner, an hour or two before the Leopard closed, Com. Barron said he distrusted her movements. As respects verbal declarations, they are always to be taken with great allowances, the ordinary language of men being so much qualified by the circumstances under which it is uttered, and they have always been held questionable evidence, except when used in cases of gravity and solemnity. A remark of this nature may have been made without suspecting hostilities, since a demand for deserters, by no means would infer an intention to resort to force, on receiving a denial.

In his defence, Com. Barron says that he expected another communication from Captain Humphreys, during which there would have been ample time, should it be necessary, to clear the ship for action, had the ship been in a condition to engage at all. In short, after carefully reviewing the testimony, and the finding of the court, most persons will be led to believe that Com. Barron was punished to the fullest extent of his offence, and, whatever may be the dictations of a rigid military code, and the exactions of stern military principles, that he was the victim of circumstances rather than of any unpardonable error of his own. It would have been safer, wiser, and more in conformity with naval rules, to have gone to quarters, as the ships approached each other, and as soon as the letter of Captain Humphreys was received, it would seem that what before was only expedient became imperative, but the case admits of so much extenuation, that general rules will hardly apply to it. It is highly satisfactory

to be able to add, that a court composed of men who, in so many instances, have shown their own devotion to the honour of the flag, closed its finding, on the subject of the personal conduct of the accused, in the following impressive language: "No transposition of the specifications, or any other modification of the charges themselves, would alter the opinion of the court as to the firmness and courage of the accused. The evidence on this point is clear and satisfactory."

The trial of Captain Gordon resulted in his being found guilty of negligently performing his duty, in connexion with some trifling informalities in the gunner's reports, and in those of the marine officer. He was sentenced to be privately reprimanded.

Captain Hall, of the marines, fared still better, his offence being purely technical; and in sentencing him to be also privately reprimanded, the court added that if it could have discovered a lighter punishment, it would have inflicted it. The gunner was cashiered, chiefly because he had neglected to fill a sufficient number of the priming horns, notwithstanding a direct order had been given to that effect, which he had reported executed. It is not easy to discover any defects in the three last decisions of the court, which would seem to have been justified by the testimony, although it was clearly established by the evidence of nearly all the sea-officers examined, that had they succeeded in firing the guns that were loaded, the means were wanting to discharge a second broadside.

The revelations made by these courts-martials, contain matter for grave reflection; and it may well be questioned, if any impartial person, who coolly examines the whole subject, will not arrive at the conclusion, that the real delinquents were never put on their

trial. It must be remembered that in the year 1807, America possessed the experience of three naval wars; that, by the force of things, she had created a corps of officers, which, small as it was, had no superior in any other country; that her artisans put on the ocean as fine vessels of their class as floated, and that the conviction of the necessity of an efficient marine, was deep and general. In the face of all these striking facts, it is seen that four months were required to fit a single frigate for sea, at a yard immediately under the eyes of Congress, and this, too, at a moment when there existed a pressing necessity for hastening the preparations *. Under such circumstances, we find that this frigate did not receive all her guns until a few days before she sailed; that her crew was coming on board to the latest hour; that her people had been quartered but three days before the ship went to sea, and that the responsible officer was acquitted of neglect, on the plea of the imperious necessity under which he had acted, although it was admitted that when a foreign vessel of war came alongside of his ship to offer, not only an indignity to his flag, but direct violence to his men, his people had never been exercised at their guns. A public cruiser had been sent out in face of those, who, armed at all points, sought her destruction, as unceremoniously, hurriedly, and negligently as if her employment was merely that of a passenger-hoy. When it was found that the nation had been disgraced, so unsound was the state of popular feeling, that the

* The Chesapeake was destined to relieve the Constitution, and the crew of the latter ship was actually in a state of mutiny, if they can be called mutineers who were illegally detained, because their times were up, and they were entitled to their discharges.

real delinquents were overlooked, while their victims became the object of popular censure.

It is an axiom, as true as it is venerable, that a "divided power becomes an irresponsible power." Such, in fact, is the nature of the authority wielded by the national legislature, the neglect of which, in the way of military and naval preparations, would long since have ruined most of the statesmen of the country, had they been guilty of the same omissions, as individuals, that they have sanctioned as bodies of men. We may lament the infatuation, condemn the selfishness, and denounce the abandonment of duty, which impel ambitious politicians to convert the legislative halls into arenas for political controversies that ought never to degrade their deliberations, or impair the sanctity of their oaths; but when we find the consequences of such unconstitutional innovations, putting in jeopardy the lives and honours of those who are subject to martial law, a solemn and reproving sentiment must unavoidably mingle with the views of every honest citizen, as he maturely considers the hardships of the case.

The act of Vice-Admiral Berkeley was disavowed by the English government, and reparation was made for the wrong *. That officer was recalled from the Ame-

* Although the Melampus was not one of the ships mentioned in the order of Vice-Admiral Berkeley, the three deserters from that ship, as has been seen, were taken away, with one from the Halifax. Two of the former were returned, and the third died. The two men returned, were delivered on the deck of the ship from which they had been violently taken away. It is understood that the deserter from the Halifax was hanged, before orders could be received from England to deliver him up. It is also said, that Captain Humphreys was never again employed, in consequence of its being thought that he had exceeded his instructions.

rican station; though the people of the Republic found just cause of complaint, in the circumstance that he was shortly after sent to a command that was considered more important. It was, perhaps, fortunate that the attack on the Chesapeake occurred at a moment when the relations between the two countries were rather more amicable than they had been for several years, or it might have led to an immediate declaration of war.

CHAPTER VIII.

Law declaring an unlimited embargo—Law authorising the construction of 188 gun-boats—Inefficiency of this force—Negociations with England—Construction of vessels for the lakes—Vacillating policy—Maritime force of the Republic—Increase of English cruisers on the American coast—The President and Little Belt—Principles recognised in the intercourse between vessels—Impressment from American vessels.

THE assault of the Leopard on the Chesapeake, was replete with political lessons for the people of the United States. It showed the insults and outrages to which nations render themselves liable, when they neglect the means of defence; it demonstrated how boldly their great commercial rivals calculated on the influence of that spirit of gain which was thought to predominate in the councils of the Republic; and it exhibited a determination, on the part of the English agents, if not on that of the government, to insist on claims that can never be yielded by independent nations, without a concession of a portion of their sovereign rights. But humiliating as all these considerations make the case, and extraordinary as were the conduct and feelings of the English, the policy pursued by the American government, as a means of punishing the aggressors, and of vindicating the rights of the country, was quite as much out of the ordinary channel of correct reasoning. With a foreign trade that employed 700,000 tons of American shipping alone, congress

passed a law on the 22nd day of December, 1807, declaring an unlimited embargo, for all the purposes of foreign commerce, on every port in the Union; anticipating a large portion of the injuries that might be expected from an open enemy, by inflicting them itself!

This extraordinary measure was not avowedly taken in consequence of the attack on the Chesapeake, for the English government early professed a readiness to atone for that outrage; but it originated in the feelings it engendered. The national pride had been wounded, and the injury rankled the deeper, because all intelligent men felt that the nation was not in a condition to resent the insult. The squadron that then lay in Lynnhaven, was probably equal to blockading the entire naval force of the United States of America, and this too, it ought never to be forgotten, in a country that met its current expenses and extinguished an ancient debt, with the duties on its imports alone, which possessed the amount of shipping already mentioned, and had nearly 100,000 registered seamen.

Congress was convened on the 26th of October, and, as soon as there had been time to deliberate on what had passed, the president, by his proclamation, interdicted all British vessels of war from entering the American waters. When the national legislature assembled, a proposition to increase the number of gunboats was laid before it. Without a sufficient naval force to raise a blockade that should be sustained by three ships of the line—with all the experience of the war of the Revolution fresh in their recollections—and with the prospect of a speedy contest with a people that scarcely hesitated about closing the ports of the

Union in a time of peace, the statesmen of the day misdirected the resources of a great and growing country, by listening to this proposition, and creating a species of force that, in its nature, is merely auxiliary to more powerful means, and which is as entirely unfitted to the moral character of the people, as it is to the natural formation of the coast. On the 18th of December, a law was passed authorising the construction of 188 gun-boats, in addition to those already built, which would raise the total number of vessels of this description in the navy, to 257. This was the development of the much condemned "gun-boat system," which, for a short time, threatened destruction to the pride, discipline, tone, and even morals of the service.

There can be no question, that, in certain circumstances, vessels of this nature may be particularly useful; but these circumstances are of rare occurrence, as they are almost always connected with attacks on towns and harbours. As the policy is now abandoned, it is unnecessary to point out the details, by which it is rendered particularly unsuitable to this country, though there is one governing principle that may be mentioned, which, of itself, demonstrates its unfitness. The American coast has an extent of near two thousand miles, and to protect it by means of gun-boats, even admitting the practicability of the method, would involve an expenditure sufficient to create a moveable force in ships, that would not only answer all the same purposes of defence, but which would possess the additional advantage of acting, at need, offensively. In other words, it was entailing on the country the cost of an efficient marine, without enjoying all its advantages.

At the time when the laws of nations and the flag of the United States were outraged, in the manner related

in the preceding chapter, the government was empowered to employ no more than 1425 seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys, in all the vessels of the navy, whether in commission, or in ordinary. The administration felt that this number was insufficient for the common wants of the service, and early in 1808, the secretary asked for authority to raise 1272 additional men, to be put on board the gun-boats, that were now ready to receive them. The necessary law, however, was withheld.

The near approach of a war, that succeeded the attack of the Leopard, appears to have admonished the English government of the necessity of using some efficient means of settling the long pending disputes between the two nations, and negociations were carried on during the year 1808, in a temper that promised a pacific termination to the quarrel, and in strict conformity with a practice (it would be an abuse of terms to call it a policy) that has long prevailed in the country, the time that should have been actively employed in preparations, was irreclaimably lost, in the idle expectation that they would not be needed. No act was passed, nor any appropriation made, either for the employment of more men, or for the placing in commission any additional vessels, until the last of January, 1809, when the president was directed to equip the United States, 44, President, 44, Essex, 32, and John Adams, 24; the latter vessel having been cut down to a sloop of war*. By the same law, the

* This ship, which was built at Charleston, South Carolina, has undergone many changes. She was constructed for a small frigate, carrying 24 twelves on her gun-deck; was then cut down to a sloop; next raised upon to be a frigate, and finally once more cut down. It is said that the ship was built by contract, and that the original con-

navy was greatly increased in efficiency, as respects the officers and men, the president being authorised to appoint as many additional midshipmen as would make a total of 450, and to employ in all, 5025 seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys. By adding the remaining officers, and the marine corps, the whole service could not have contained a total of less than 7000 persons, when the act was carried into execution.

The equipment of the ships just mentioned, and the active employment of all the small vessels of the service, probably saved the navy of the United States from a total disorganization. It was the means of withdrawing a large portion of the officers from the gun-boats, and of renewing that high tone and admirable discipline which had distinguished it, at the close of the Tripolitan war. By this time, nearly all the midshipmen who had been before Tripoli, were lieutenants; and there was already one instance in which an officer, who had entered the navy as a midshipman, commanded the frigate in which he had first served*.

About this time, too, the government seriously turned its attention towards the great lakes, as inland waters on which its future policy might render the employment of vessels of war necessary. Both England and France had used cruisers on the great lakes, in the early history of the country, though the settlements of the

tractor, let out one side of her to a sub-contractor, who, in a spirit of economy, so much reduced her moulds, that the ship had actually several inches more beam on one side, than on the other. As a consequence, she both bore her canvass, and sailed better on one tack than on the other. The John Adams was rebuilt entirely, a few years since; and the present vessel is one of the most beautiful ships of her class that floats.

* Capt. Decatur.

former did not extend to their shores, until after the conquest of Canada. In the war of the Revolution, vessels were built on Lake Champlain, by both the belligerents, though, in no instance, had any American naval officer ever yet been employed on the interior waters. In the course of the summer of 1808, however, it was thought prudent to make a commencement towards the employment of a force in that quarter, England already possessing ships on Ontario and Erie.

There being no especial law for such an object, advantage was taken of the discretionary powers granted to the president under the act for building gun-boats, for this purpose. A few officers were placed under the orders of Lieutenant M. T. Woolsey, and that gentleman was empowered to make contracts for the construction of three vessels, one of which was to be built on Lake Ontario, and the other two on Lake Champlain. The two vessels constructed on Lake Champlain were merely ordinary gun-boats, but that constructed on Lake Ontario was a regular brig of war. The latter was of about two hundred and forty tons measurement, was pierced for sixteen guns, and when delivered by the contractors, in the spring of 1809, to the sea officers ordered to receive her, she mounted 16 twenty-four pound carronades. In consequence of an arrangement that was made, about this time, with England, but which was not ratified in Europe, this vessel, which was called the Oneida, was not equipped and sent upon the lake until the following year.

This was a period of vacillating policy in both nations, England, at times, appearing disposed to arrange amicably the many difficult points that had

arisen with America, and the latter country acting, at moments, as if it believed war to be impossible, while at others, it seemed to be in earnest with its preparations. Thus passed the years 1808, 1809, and 1810, the embargo having been raised, followed by a non-intercourse law with Great Britain, and succeeded by an absence of all restrictions.

During these years of doubt, the vessels of the navy that were in commission, were principally employed on the coast, or they kept up the communications with the different diplomatic agents in Europe, by carrying despatches. There is no question that these were important years to the service, for, since the attack on the Chesapeake, the utmost vigilance prevailed, and every commander watched jealously for an opportnnity to wipe out the disgrace, real or imaginary, of that unfortunate affair. No more vessels were sent to the Mediterranean, but the whole maritime force of the republic was kept at home. The country had now in active service the following vessels, *viz.*:—

President,	44,	Hornet,	18,
Constitution,	44,	Argus,	16,
United States,	44,	Siren,	16,
Essex,	32,	Nautilus,	12,
John Adams,	24,	Enterprise,	12,
Wasp,	18,	Vixen,	12.

In addition to these cruisers, were a great number of gun-boats, which were principally commanded by sailing-masters, who had been selected from among the officers of merchant vessels. The Nautilus and Vixen had both been rigged into brigs; the Enterprise soon after was altered in the same manner, and there proving an occasion to rebuild the Hornet, she was converted into a ship, and pierced for two more guns,

making twenty in all. But, unhappily, the opportunity was lost, of building and equipping a force that could prevent blockades.

The English increased their cruisers on the American coast, in proportion to the Americans themselves, though their vessels no longer lay off the harbours, impressing men, and detaining ships. It was seldom that a British cruiser was now seen near the land, the government probably cautioning its commanders to avoid unnecessary exhibitions of this sort, with a view to prevent collisions. Still they were numerous, cruised at no great distance, and by keeping up constant communications between Bermuda and Halifax, may be said to have intercepted nearly every ship that passed from one hemisphere to the other.

Such, in effect, was the state of things in the spring of the year 1811, when information was received by the senior officer of the navy afloat, Com. Rodgers, that a man had been impressed from an American brig, at no great distance from Sandy Hook, by an English frigate that was supposed to be the Guerriere, 38, Capt. Dacres. The broad pennant of Com. Rodgers was flying on board the President, 44, Capt. Ludlow, which ship was then anchored off Annapolis. Repairing on board his vessel, he got under way with an intention of proceeding off New York, to inquire into the facts, on the 10th of May, passing the capes shortly after.

On the 16th of May, about noon, a sail was made from the President, which ship was then about six leagues from the land, to the southward of New York. It was soon perceived that the stranger was a vessel of war, by the squareness of his yards, and the symmetry of his sails, and the American frigate stood for him,

with an intention to get within hail. At two the President set her broad pennant and ensign. The stranger now made several signals, but finding they were not answered, he wore and stood to the southward. Although the President gained upon the chase, the wind lessened, and night set in before she could get near enough to distinguish her force. It was past seven o'clock in the evening when the stranger took in his studding-sails, hauled up his courses, and came by the wind on the starboard tack. He now set an ensign at his gaff, but it was too dark to discover the nation. As he came to the wind, he necessarily showed his broadside, and was taken for a small frigate.

The President continuing to stand down, the chase wore for several times, in order to prevent the American frigate from getting a position to windward. It was consequently near half-past eight before Com. Rodgers could bring to, as he had desired, on the weather bow of the stranger, or a little forward of his beam, when, being within a hundred yards, he hailed, and demanded "what ship is that?" No answer was given to this question, but it was repeated, word for word, from the stranger. After a short pause the question was again put, when the stranger fired a gun, the shot from which cut away a breast-back-stay, and entered the main-mast. Com. Rodgers was on the point of ordering a shot to be returned, when one of the guns was discharged from the second division of the President. The stranger now fired three guns in quick succession, and then, after a short pause, the remainder of his broadside and all his musketry. The President, as a matter of course, delivered her broadside in return. In a few minutes, however, it was perceived, on board the American vessel, that they were

engaged with an adversary so inferior as to render her resistance very feeble, and orders were sent to the different divisions to stop their fire.

The guns of the President were soon silent, when, to the surprise of all on board her, the stranger opened anew. The fire of the American frigate recommenced, but it was again stopped in the course of a very few minutes, in consequence of the crippled condition of her antagonist, who lay nearly end on, and apparently unmanageable. The American now hailed again, and got an answer that her adversary was a British ship of war, though the name was inaudible, on account of the wind, which had increased. Satisfied that his late opponent was disabled, and having no desire to do more than had already been accomplished, Com. Rodgers gave the name of his own ship, wore round, and running a short distance to leeward, he hauled by the wind again, with a view to remain nigh the English vessel during the night. The President kept lights displayed, in order to let her late antagonist know her position, and wore several times to remain near her.

When the day dawned the English ship was discovered some distance to leeward, her drift in the night having been considerable. The President bore up under easy canvass, and running down to her, a boat was lowered, and Mr. Creighton, the first lieutenant, was sent on board, with an offer of services. The stranger proved to be His Britannic Majesty's ship Little Belt, 18, Captain Bingham. The Little Belt was a vessel of 22 guns, but having a light spar-deck above, on which no guns were mounted, she had the external appearance of a small frigate. She had suffered severely by the fire of the President, and thirty-one of her people had been killed and wounded. As

Captain Bingham declined receiving any assistance, the vessels parted, each making the best of her way to a port of her own nation.

This occurrence gave rise to much angry discussion in America, and widened the breach which already existed between the English and the American nations. The account given by Captain Bingham differed essentially from that of Com. Rodgers, and official investigations were made on both sides. On that of the Americans a formal court of inquiry was held, and every officer that was in the ship was examined, as well as a great many of the petty officers. The testimony was very clear, and it was in a great measure free from the discrepancies that usually distinguish accounts of battles, whether by sea or by land. The fact that the Little Belt fired the first gun was established by the oath of the officer who ordered the gun fired in return, as this gentleman distinctly testified that he gave the command, under a standing order of the ship, and in consequence of having seen the flash and heard the report of the Little Belt's gun. He not only testified that he heard the report of the gun, but that he also heard the noise made by the shot which had entered the mast. Other officers and men corroborated this account, and in a way to render their evidence not only consistent with itself, but with probability. As the President was very fully officered, the number and respectability of the witnesses put all cavilling about the facts at rest in the country.

It is believed that there was no proper court of inquiry held on the conduct of Captain Bingham, though affidavits of most of his officers were published. By that officer's official account, as it has been given to the world, as well as by the affidavits mentioned, it is

affirmed that the President commenced the action by firing, not a single gun, but an entire broadside. He also intimated that the action lasted three quarters of an hour, and appeared desirous of leaving the impression that the President had sheered off.

As between the two governments, the question was reduced to one of veracity. If the account of the American officer was true, that of the English officer was untrue; and if the account of the English officer was true, that of the American officer was untrue. Both governments, as commonly happens, seeming disposed to believe its own officers. Contrary to what might have been expected, no political consequences followed this rencontre. The President sustained little injury, no round shot, besides the one in her mainmast and another in her foremast, having struck her, and, of her people, one boy alone was slightly wounded by a musket ball. The Little Belt, on the other hand, having suffered even out of proportion to the disparity of force between the vessels, the American government was satisfied with the punishment already inflicted on the assailants; while the English government could not well demand reparation without demanding that the American functionaries would not believe their own officer. After some communications on the subject, and an exchange of the testimony that had been given, nothing further appears to have been done, or contemplated, by either government.

Not so, however, with the people of the two nations. In England, the account of Captain Bingham was generally believed, and it served to increase a dislike that was so little concealed as to attract general comment. In America there were two parties, one of which as blindly defended, perhaps, as the other blindly

condemned their own officer. A strong feeling existed in the towns, and among a large portion of the rural population, in favour of what was called the English cause, as the struggles of Great Britain were connected with the general war, and party feeling had blinded so many to the truth, that the country had a great number of persons who, without stopping to examine into facts, were disposed to believe their own government and all its agents wrong, whenever they came at all in collision with that of England. This portion of the community, influenced by the remains of colonial dependence, fostered by the prejudices and influence of English merchants settled in the towns, and strengthened by the acrimony of party, was bitter in its denunciations against Com. Rodgers, and it may be doubted if that officer ever regained, in the public estimation, the standing that was lost by means so equivocal. They who judge of military life merely by its brilliancy and parade, in moments of display, know little of the privations of the soldier and sailor. Obliged to live under laws that are peculiar to himself, weighed down with a responsibility that makes no show to casual observers, and placed in situations to decide and act in cases in which the principles are contested even by the most acute minds, the officer of rank is entitled to receive every indulgence which comports with justice and reason. Most of all ought he to be protected against the calumnies and assaults of the enemy, and of the disaffected of his own nation. That his country's enemies should assail him wrongfully, though unjustifiable, is perhaps to be expected; but when the blow comes from those who should ever listen coldly to hostile accusations, bitter indeed is the draught that he is made to swallow.

In the case of Com. Rodgers, much sophistry, in addition to some arguments that were not without their force, was used, to show that he was wrong in chasing the Little Belt, and in not answering her hail, instead of insisting on receiving a reply to his own. As the case is connected with general principles that are in constant use in the intercourse between vessels, it may be useful to give them a brief examination.

Those who condemned Com. Rodgers, insisted that it was the duty of a neutral not to chase a belligerent, but to submit to be chased by her; and, as a neutral could have no inducement to conceal her name, he was bound to make a prompt answer when hailed by the Little Belt, the latter being a belligerent. These two positions were supported by quotations from some of the writers on international law, who have laid down opinions to this effect.

The laws of nations are merely a set of rules that have grown out of necessity, and which, like the common law, are founded in reason. The received commentators on this code, while they have confined themselves to principles, have been remarkable for their knowledge, and the justice of their deductions; but, in many cases in which they have descended to details, they betray the ignorance which distinguishes the mere man of theory from him who has been taught in the school of practice. Without the right to chase, a vessel of war would be perfectly useless in a time of peace, and pirates, smugglers, mutineers, and even those vessels which, by being subject to the laws of the same country, are properly amenable to the supervision of a man-of-war, would escape by steering in a direction different from that of the cruiser. No military duty whatever could be discharged at sea, without

the right to chase; nor is it usual among seamen to consider the mere act of chasing an act of hostility. Vessels chase each other, even when the object is to ask succour; nor is it possible to deliver despatches to communicate news, to ask for information, or to do any thing which requires that ships should be near each other, without chasing, when one of the parties sees fit to steer in a wrong direction.

Neither is the right to hail a purely belligerent right, since, like the right to chase, which is clearly a step in communicating, after vessels are near enough to speak. If a hail necessarily brought a true answer, there would be more reason in bestowing the right on belligerents; though even in that case, it would be easy to cite instances in which it would be useless. There may be many wars at the same time, and belligerents that are neutrals as respects each other might meet on the high seas, and if both parties stood on their abstract right to hail, a combat would be inevitable. Belligerents are properly invested with no exclusive privileges, that are not in their nature reasonable, and which bring with them direct and useful consequences. Thus the right to hail, without a right to insist on a true answer, is a perfectly negative privilege; and it will not be pretended that ships will not answer as they may see expedient at the moment. So far from the answer to a hail's bringing with it any necessary advantage to the party hailing, in time of war it is often the means of placing the latter in a worse situation than he would be without resorting to the hail at all. Such was the fact in the case of the Philadelphia, the people of which ship were lulled into a fatal security by the answer received to their hail. In short, as the right to hail brings with it no necessary advantage, it is folly to

attribute it to any party as an exclusive privilege. Vessels of war must ascertain which are enemies and which are neutrals in the best manner they can, as civil officers are compelled to look out the individuals they would arrest in society, it being certain that both foes and debtors will deceive those who seek them, if there is a motive and an opportunity.

But the vindication of Com. Rodgers' course is by no means limited to this argument. He was cruising on his own coast, where it was the peculiar province of a vessel of war to exercise vigilance, and particularly to be on the alert, lest the belligerents themselves exceeded their powers. Neutrals are by no means destitute of rights of this important nature. It was known that the English cruisers were in the practice of seizing American vessels on pretences that were not recognised by international law, and of even impressing seamen under a regulation that was purely municipal, and which, so far from being in accordance with the laws of nations, was not only opposed to them, but which was a direct violation of national rights, of common sense, reason, and natural justice. This was not all; in executing this municipal law on the high seas, they even exceeded the limits acknowledged by themselves, and were in the constant practice of carrying off Americans, and seamen of other nations, from American ships, as well as the subjects of the British crown. As it is clearly the general duty of the commander of an American vessel of war, to prevent the violation of the laws of nations, whenever it is in his power, unless expressly ordered by his own governmen not to interfere, it was more particularly the duty of such a commander to be vigilant, and to prevent these abuses on his own coast. No English vessel of war would hesitate an instant, in preventing

impressment from a merchant ship of his nation, nor should any American. The American commander of a public ship, who should passively witness an impressment from a merchant vessel of his own nation, unless restrained by his orders, would deserve to be cashiered. As connected solely with public law and general justice, there can be no question that the commander of a vessel of war, who knew that a countryman had been impressed by a ship of another nation, would have a perfect right to pursue that ship, and, at need, to liberate the man by force. That high considerations of policy have hitherto prevented the American government from issuing orders to that effect, or have induced it to issue orders of a contrary nature, in no degree impairs a right which is connected with one of the principal objects for which vessels of war are kept afloat, the protection of the person and property of the citizen, when beyond the reach of local authority: How far Com. Rodgers was authorised to act in this manner, by his own government, or whether he was prohibited from interfering at all, on motives of policy, does not appear; and we are bound to believe that every officer is disposed to do his whole duty. As the subject is connected with the causes of quarrel which, shortly after the rencontre between the President and Little Belt, produced a war between the two countries, this may be a proper place to make a further allusion to the occurrences and claims that brought about that important event.

From the period of the commencement of the general war in Europe, the American commerce had been exposed to a series of decrees, orders in council, blockades, and constructions of belligerent rights that were entirely novel, both in principles and practice, and which, in the end, rested on a justification no better

than a determination to retaliate for the wrongs done to neutrals through the hostile nation, by punishing the sufferer. It is unnecessary to add, that Great Britain and France were the nations that pursued this high-handed and illegal policy, unduly subjecting all the rest of Christendom to the consequences of their quarrels. In this strife in injustice, there was not any essential difference in the conduct of the two great belligerents, so far as principle was concerned, though England was enabled to do America much the most harm, in consequence of her superior power on the ocean.

To the wrongs inflicted on the American commerce, by means of her illegal blockades and forced constructions of colonial privileges, England, however, added the intolerable outrage of impressment from on board American vessels on the high seas.

The government of England claims a right, by prescription, to require the services of all its own seamen, as well as those of all subjects who may be deemed vagabonds, for the royal navy, in a time of war. Some exceptions are made in favour of apprentices and others, either by statutes, or by concessions from the administration; but these do not impair the principle. That communities have a legal right to make any regulations of this nature is not disputed, though in exercising privileges that the usages of mankind tolerate, nothing is easier than to offend against natural justice and the laws of God. It is evident, in the first place, that a law, or a usage, which compels a particular portion of society to serve on board ships, for an unlimited period, without reciprocity as regards their fellow-subjects, and for a compensation determined by the state, is founded in injustice. England may

find her justification for the practice in her necessities perhaps, though necessity is but a poor apology for any moral wrong, but it cannot be seriously contended that she has a right to make another people an accessary, directly or indirectly, to the oppression. In considering the purely legal question, this moral consideration should never be lost sight of.

Admitting, in the fullest extent, the right of a nation to impress its own citizens or subjects, it is in no manner a belligerent right. The fact, that it claims no power to exercise the practice in time of peace does not give the latter, in the least, the character of a belligerent right, since all belligerent rights are deducible from international law; whereas the authority to impress is derived solely from the government in which the practice exists. That England exercises the power to impress only in a time of war, is dependent on her own will, whereas a belligerent right would be altogether independent of local control. It is just as competent for the parliament of Great Britain to say it will impress in a time of peace, as it is to permit impressment in time of war, or for it to except certain classes from the operation of the practice. The King of England, according to the theory of the British constitution, makes war, and it is the king who requires the services of this particular class of his subjects; and if he thus requires them under the law of nations, the parliament has no power to curtail his authority. In passing a law to exempt any portion of the community from impressment, the English government itself admits that the authority to impress is derived from municipal, and not from international law. The only privilege conferred by the usages of nations, in connexion with this practice, is the permission for each country to make its

own municipal regulations; and in granting to England the right to impress her own seamen, they also grant to America the right to say that no impressment shall take place under the American flag.

The fact, however, that impressment is local and not a general right, is independent of all ex-parte admissions, or narrow regulations. There must be an entire reciprocity, in the nature of things, in all international law; and no country that in the least defers to natural justice, can devote a particular class of its people to a compulsory service in vessels of war. It follows as necessary consequences, that the monstrous doctrine must be asserted, that one nation shall not respect natural justice in its laws, because it is not convenient for all other nations to imitate it; that reciprocity is not necessary to international law; or that impressment is strictly a national and not an international regulation. For a particular people to pretend to legislate on, or to qualify, in any manner, a right derived from the laws of nations, is an insult to the community of nations, since it is arrogating to themselves a power to control that which is only dependent on common consent.

If it be admitted that the right to impress is solely a municipal power, it follows inevitably that it cannot legally be practised on the high seas, on board of vessels of a nation different from that of the party claiming to exercise the authority. No principle is better settled than that which declares a ship, for all the purposes of municipal law, to be solely within the jurisdiction of her own flag, while out of all territorial jurisdiction. England might just as legally claim to arrest persons for treason, poaching, or crime of any sort, on board American vessels on the high seas, as to claim a right to

impress even her own seamen. Both cases would be an attempt to extend the jurisdiction of one people over the authority of another.

Although, as a general rule, impressment and the seizure of criminals, on board American vessels on the high seas, would be an equal violation of public and municipal law, as a particular grievance the former practice would give more just ground of complaint than the latter. The arrest of a criminal merely invades the jurisdiction and offends the sovereignty of a people, while impressment inflicts a serious practical evil, by depriving ships of their crews, at a moment when they have the greatest need of them. Did England actually possess the right to take her seamen on the high seas, America, under those general principles that pervade all law, whether public or private, would have a claim to insist that her right should be exercised in a way to do her the least possible injury.

Such are the general principles that touch the case. An examination of the subordinate facts leaves England still less justification for the practice she asserts. In the first place, that country contends that America gives employment to a large number of British subjects in her mercantile and her public marine. This is true; but England does the same as respects all other nations. During the general wars, the merchant vessels of Great Britain receive seamen from all parts of the world, and probably one half of those thus employed are foreigners, Americans included. Not only are volunteers of all nations received in her ships of war, but frequently men are impressed who have not the smallest personal, or national, similitude to English subjects. It is true, that England never asserted a right to take any but her own subjects, on the high seas or elsewhere, but it is equally

true that, in exercising the right she claims, her agents have impressed thousands of native Americans*. The excuse for taking these men, was the difficulty of distinguishing between an English and an American sailor, by mere external evidence. This difficulty, of itself, is an additional reason why England should hesitate about resorting to the practice, even admitting the right to exist, since it is a governing principle that qualifies the exercise of every right, that it is not to be used affirmatively, to the prejudice of third parties.

That England may need the services of her seamen, in no manner entitles her to violate neutral privileges to obtain them. Such a doctrine would authorise a belligerent nation, in its extremity, to rob the treasury of a neutral in order to pay its troops. The attempt which has been made to liken the necessities of states to the necessities of individuals, in connection with this subject, involves a violation of all principle, and there is no just similitude between the cases. The man who is starving probably commits no moral crime, when he takes food that does not belong to him, after having exhausted all the legal means of procuring nourishment that are in his power, since in all respects he yields to an imperious natural necessity; but the nation that pleads necessity for its violations of natural and legal rights, is merely upholding artificial interests, and those too that are often unjust in themselves, by artificial expedients. We may not censure the drowning

* It has been satisfactorily ascertained that the number of impressed Americans on board British ships of war, was seldom less than the entire number of seamen in the American navy between the years 1802 and 1812. At the declaration of war in 1812, the number that was turned over to the prison ships for refusing to fight against their own country, is said to have exceeded two thousand.

man who fastens upon our legs, but no one will dispute our right to shake him off.

Expediency has no necessary connection with right; but if the necessities of England are to be used as an argument in favour of her doctrine of impressment, so may necessity be used against it on the part of America. The first is a country with an overflowing population, among whom men are driven to obtain livelihoods in the best manner they can. Thus, in time of peace, the excess of seamen, in Great Britain, drives them abroad to seek employment, and they have the effect to keep the American on shore, by lowering prices. As a consequence, a large portion of the men in American ships are English sailors, who, under the doctrine of England, are all liable to be reclaimed for the service of that country in a time of war. This system is evidently rendering the American mercantile marine a nursery for English seamen, and converting a legitimate means of national force, into a scheme for destroying it.

The principles that control this interest, are of a very simple character. Each nation has a right to make its own municipal ordinances, and the country that claims the services of its seamen, is bound to extend its regulations so far as to keep that class of its subjects within its own jurisdiction, or to incur the risk of having its claim defeated, by the conflicting rights of other states.

CHAPTER IX.

Effect of American gunnery—Occurrence on board the Essex—The Constitution chased by several English men-of-war—State of the American navy in 1812—Approaching conflict with Great Britain.

It has been seen that no consequences, beyond an increased alienation between the two countries, followed the rencontre between the President and Little Belt. Although the American navy could not exult in a victory over a force as inferior as that of the English vessel, it did not fail to make comparisons between the effect of the fire of their own frigate, and that of the Leopard, in the attack on the Chesapeake. In both cases the water was sufficiently smooth, and the trifling resistance made by the Little Belt was so much against the chances of the President, as the Chesapeake made no resistance at all. Close observers noted the important fact, that the English ship, in twelve minutes' unresisted firing, killed and wounded but twenty-one persons among a frigate's ship-company, while the American vessel, in a firing of but six or eight minutes, had killed and wounded thirty-one, on board a sloop of war*.

Not long after the meeting between the President and Little Belt, the United States, 44, bearing the broad pennant of Com. Decatur, fell in with the

* In consequence of the President's forging ahead, her forward guns were not all fired the second time.

Euryalus and Atalanta British ships, off New York, and, while the commanders were hailing, one of the seamen of the former vessel, in carelessly handling the lanyard of his lock, fired a gun. The reader will learn in this fact, the high state of preparation that then prevailed in an American man-of-war, the lock having been cocked, and every thing in perfect readiness to commence an action, at a moment's notice. Happily both parties were cool and discreet, and proper explanations having been made, the English commander was entirely satisfied that no insult, or assault, was intended.

During the remainder of the year 1811, and the commencement of that of 1812, the public ships were kept actively cruising on the coast, as before, or they were employed in communicating with the different diplomatic agents in Europe. While in England, on such service, an occurrence took place on board the Essex, 32, Capt. Smith, that is worthy of being recorded, as proving that something more than American artifices were at the bottom of the reluctance of the English seamen to serve in their own vessels of war.

It was accidentally ascertained that one of the Essex's crew was a deserter from a British man-of-war, and he was formally demanded. Being within the jurisdiction of Great Britain, Capt. Smith, an officer of great spirit, and of a high reputation in the service, did not feel himself justified in refusing to deliver up the seaman. The man protested that he was an American, and that he had not entered voluntarily into the English service, though he did not deny his identity, and the desertion. It being thought impossible to protect him, the seaman was sent below to get his clothes, and obeyed. On reaching the gun-

deck, his eye fell upon the carpenter's bench, and going to it, he seized an axe, and at one blow cut off his left hand. Taking up the severed limb in the remaining hand, he went upon the quarter-deck, and presented himself to the British officer, bleeding and maimed. The latter left the Essex, shocked and astonished, while the affair made a deep impression on all who witnessed it.

About this time, the Constitution, 44, Capt. Hull, was sent to Europe, having on board specie for the payment of the interest on the debt due in Holland. After touching at Cherbourg, the Constitution went off the Texel, and landing her money, though not without great difficulty, in consequence of the roughness of the weather, and the great distrust of those on shore, who were closely blockaded by the English, she proceeded to Portsmouth, where she remained a few days, in order to communicate with the legation at London.

Having despatched his business in England, Capt. Hull sailed for France. The day succeeding the night on which the Constitution left Portsmouth, several sail of English men-of-war were seen in chase, and as there had been some difficulty about deserters while in port*, it was the impression on board the American

* While lying at anchor in the roads, a man let himself into the water, and swam with the tide to the Madagascar frigate, which was lying directly astern of the Constitution. The deserter was too much exhausted when first taken up, to state his object, and the Madagascar sent a boat to acquaint the officers of the Constitution that one of their men had fallen overboard, and had been picked up by that ship. Accordingly, a cutter was sent in the morning to procure the man, when the officer was told that he had claimed protection as an Englishman, and that he had been sent on board the guard-ship. Capt. Hull was not on board at the time, and Mr. Morris, the first lieutenant, sought an interview with Sir Roger Curtis, the admiral then

ship that the vessels were sent in pursuit. The Constitution outsailed all the strangers but one, a frigate that weathered upon her. After leading this ship a

in command at Portsmouth. Mr. Morris was very politely received, and he stated his errand. The admiral informed Mr. Morris that it was not in his power to give up a deserter who claimed to be a British subject. "Have you any evidence, Sir Rodger, beyond the man's own word, that he is actually an Englishman?"—"None whatever, sir, but we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect." Nothing remained for the American officer but to return on board his own ship.

That night extra sentinels were posted, with positive orders to fire at any thing that might be seen floating near the ship. About midnight two or three muskets were discharged, and, on inquiry, it was found that there was a man in the water close alongside. A boat was lowered, and it brought on board a seaman of the Madagascar, who had contrived to buoy himself up by means of some shells of blocks, and, profiting by a turn in the tide, to drift down upon the Constitution. This man was asked what countryman he was, and he answered, in a strong Irish accent, "an American, your honour." He was sent below, with orders to take good care of him.

The next day the deserter was inquired after, and it was intimated that as he said he was an American, he could not be given up. It is believed, however, that no formal demand was made for the Irishman, though it was rumoured on shore that there would be trouble when the Constitution attempted to go to sea, as it was known she was about to do that night. In the course of the day two frigates came and anchored near her, when, disliking his berth, the American commanding officer got under weigh, and dropped out about a mile farther to seaward. So close were the British ships at the time, that the pilot expressed his apprehensions of getting foul of one them, and he was told to go foul, if he could do no better. By careful handling, however the ship went clear.

A frigate followed the Constitution to her new anchorage. About eight o'clock, Capt. Hull, who was now on board, ordered the ship cleared for action. The lanterns were lighted, fore and aft, and the people went to quarters, by beat of drum. It is not easy to pourtray the enthusiasm that existed in this noble ship, every officer and man on board believing that the affair of the Chesapeake was about to be repeated; so far, at least, as the assault was concerned. The manner in which the people took hold of the gun-tackles has been described as if they were about to jerk the guns through the ship's sides. An officer, who was passing through the batteries, observed to the men, that if there was an occasion to fight, it would be in their quarrel, and that he expected good service from them. "Let the quarter-deck

long distance ahead of the others, Capt. Hull hove to, beat to quarters, and waited to know her object. It fortunately proved to be amicable.

Before quitting Cherbourg, off which place English cruisers were constantly hovering, it had been agreed that the Constitution, on her return, should show a particular signal, in order that the French batteries might not mistake her for a cruiser of the enemy. On reaching the entrance of the port, one of the English vessels kept close to the American frigate, while the latter was turning up into the roads, with a fresh breeze, and in thick weather. Unfortunately, some strong objections existed to making the signal, and the batteries fired a gun. The shot struck the Constitution in the bends. It was soon followed by a second that flew between the masts. A third passed through the hammocks stowed in the waist, and stove one of the boats. The steadiness of the frigate now induced the French to pause, and an opportunity offering soon after to show the signal, the firing ceased. The English ship bore up, as soon as the battery opened*.

look out for the colours," was the answer, " and we will look out for the guns." In short, it was not possible for a ship's company to be in a better humour to defend the honour of the flag, when the drum beat the retreat, and the boatswain piped the people to the capstan-bars. The ship lifted her anchor, and stood over towards Cherbourg, however, without being followed. There is no doubt that the prudence of Sir Roger Curtis alone prevented an engagement of some sort or other, on this occasion. That officer probably felt, as many of the older officers of the British service are understood to have felt, the injustice of the English system, particularly as it was practised towards America.

* One of those singular cases of death is said to have occurred on board the Constitution, on this occasion, that sometimes follow injuries inflicted by cannon shot. A midshipman was passing along the ship's waist, at the moment the shot that stove the boat entered,

The Hornet, 18, Capt. Lawrence, followed the Constitution to Europe, and the Wasp the Hornet. In this manner did the autumn of 1811, and the spring of 1812 pass, ship succeeding ship, with the despatches and diplomatic communications that so soon after terminated in the war with England. As we are now approaching the most important period in the history of the American navy, it may be well to take a short review of its actual condition.

Between the reduction in 1801, and the commencement of 1812, a period of eleven eventful years, during which the nation was scarcely a day without suffering violations of its neutral rights, not a single frigate had been added to the navy! The ships of the line authorised in 1799 were entirely abandoned, and notwithstanding the critical relations of the country, the experience of the past, and so many years of commercial prosperity, the navy, in some respects, was in a worse situation than after the sale of the ships in 1801. Of the thirteen frigates retained at that time, the Philadelphia, 38, had been taken and destroyed, and the New York, 36; General Greene, 28; and Boston, 28, had gone to decay, without repairs. Thus, in point of fact, though twelve ships of this class appear on the list of the day, but nine actually existed for any practical purposes. The various vessels of inferior force, that have been already mentioned in this work, as constructed under different laws, had been added to the navy, while two or three temporarily taken into the service were already sold. A few small schooners

and he fell. He was taken up, carried below, and in a day or two died, though no external hurt was visible. It is supposed that the shot must have produced the death, though in what manner is unknown.

had been purchased. Navy yards had been established at Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Washington, Gosport, and Portsmouth, though they were still in their infancy, and very incomplete. One hundred and seventy gun-boats had also been built, and were distributed in the different ports of the country.

While the navy on the whole, the gun-boats excepted, had rather lost than gained in physical force, since the reduction of 1801, it had improved immeasurably in discipline, tone, and in an *esprit de corps*. The little that had been lost, in these respects, through the service in gun-boats, was more than regained by the effect produced by the attack on the Chesapeake, and the constant state of excitement that prevailed with regard to English aggressions during the few preceding years. The list of captains, masters-commandant, and lieutenants were small, but filled with men trained to obedience, and, consequently, qualified to command. It is true, but one of the officers of the Revolution remained, who was at the head of the service; and he was nearly superannuated by years and infirmities; but those to whom they had imparted their traditions and spirit had succeeded them. Com. Samuel Nicholson, whose name first appeared in our pages, in 1776, as commander of the Dolphin, 10, died at the head of the service at the close of the year 1811. The celebrated Preble had preceded him several years to the grave, and Com. Murray alone remained of those officers who might be said to have belonged to the old school*. Still, the new school was in no

* Edward Preble was born in August 1761, at Kittery, in the present state, then province, of Maine. His direct ancestor, Abraham Preble, lived in the colonies as early as 1637, at least, and his father, Jedediah Preble, died at Portland in 1784, having held the rank of

respect inferior; and in some particulars, it was greatly the superior of that which had gone before it. The vessels, generally, were good ships of their respective classes, and the officers, as a body, were every way worthy to take charge of them. Several of those who had been retained as midshipmen, after the war with France, were already commanders, and the vessels

Brigadier General in the militia of the Revolution. Young Preble went early to sea, and is said to have served as a midshipman, in the Massachusetts state ship, Protector, Capt. Williams, in her hard-fought action with the Duff. He appears subsequently on board the Winthrop, Capt. Little, a cruiser in the service of the same state, as her first lieutenant. In this capacity, he boarded and carried, in the Penobscot, a strong letter of marque, an exploit that, in its day, was thought to be little inferior to the capture of the Philadelphia. At the peace of 1783, Mr. Preble, who was then but twenty-two, was compelled to retire to private life, though he carried with him a reputation that was not forgotten. During the twelve or fourteen years that succeeded, Mr. Preble was employed in command of merchant vessels, increasing his nautical experience, and improving his private circumstances. He also married.

When the present navy was established, Mr. Preble entered it as one of the senior lieutenants. He is believed to have been the first of the first lieutenants ordered to the Constitution, 44; and as the principle was laid down, that the officers of the frigates first built, should have relative rank agreeably to the seniority of their captains, this would have made Mr. Preble the second lieutenant in the navy. He did not remain long in the Constitution, however, his name appearing as early as 1798, in command of the Pickering, 14. The commission of lieutenant-commandant is known to have been issued during the war with France, and Mr. Preble's name standing in the reports of the day as a lieutenant-commandant, he is believed to have held that commission. On the 15th of May, 1799, Mr. Preble was raised to the rank of captain, without having passed by that of master-commandant. He was shortly after appointed to the Essex, 32, of which ship he was the first commander. While in the Essex, he cruised as far as the East Indies, returning home about the time peace was restored. No opportunity occurred for Capt. Preble to distinguish himself in this war. In 1803, Capt. Preble hoisted his broad pennant on board the Constitution, as commander of the Mediterranean squadron. His services in that important station, are already related in the body of the work.

Com. Preble suffered much from ill health, and after his return

beneath the rate of frigates, with one exception, were commanded by gentlemen of this description. The exception was in the case of the Wasp, 18, on board which ship was Capt. Jones, who had been the youngest of the lieutenants retained in 1801, and who was now the oldest master-commandant. He had joined the service, however, as a midshipman.

If the naval armaments made by the country, under the prospect of a war with Great Britain, are to be regarded with the eyes of prudence, little more can be said, than to express astonishment at the political infatuation which permitted the day of preparation to pass, unheeded. Still a little was done, and that little it is our duty to record.

Early in 1809, the marine corps was augmented by an addition of near 700 men, which probably put this

home, he was employed in the command of a navy yard. He died August the 25th, 1807, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he commanded at the time.

The name of Preble will always be associated with the reputation of the American navy. He was the first officer who ever commanded a series of active military operations, in squadron, against an enemy, unless the irregular and anomalous cruise of Paul Jones entitled him to that distinction; none of the other commands, during the two previous wars, partaking exactly of this character. In addition to this advantage, Com. Preble had high professional qualities. Although, personally, far from being a favourite with those under his orders, he possessed the perfect respect and entire obedience of his subordinates. His discipline was high-toned, and his notions of the duties of an inferior, were of the most rigid kind. On one occasion, he is known to have sternly rebuked an officer for covering and protecting a bombard against an attempt to cut her off, because it was done without a signal from the flag-ship. He was, however, generous and liberal in his appreciation of merit, and quite ready to do justice to all who deserved his commendations. As he died at the early age of 45, the country lost many years of services that it had expected; and Com. Preble himself, in all probability, much renown that one of his character would have been likely to gain in the war that succeeded.

important branch of the navy, on a footing equal to the rest of the service, as it then existed; the entire corps containing about 1300 men when full. On the 30th of March, 1812, or less than three months previously to the war with England, Congress authorised the President to cause three additional frigates to be put in service, and the sum of $200,000 annually was appropriated for the purchase of timber to rebuild the three frigates that had been permitted to decay, and the one that had been captured.

When the amount of these appropriations is considered, the conclusion would seem inevitable, that the government did not at all anticipate hostilities, were it not for the more ample preparations that were making on land, and the large sums that had been expended on gun-boats. It is not improbable, therefore, that those to whom the direction of affairs was confided, believed the naval force of the country too insignificant, and that of Great Britain too overwhelming, to render any serious efforts to create a marine, at that late hour, expedient. A comparison of the naval forces of Great Britain and the United States, with their respective conditions, will render this idea plausible, although it may not fully justify it, as a measure of policy.

In 1812, the navy of Great Britain nominally contained a thousand and sixty sail, of which between seven and eight hundred were efficient cruising vessels. France had no fleets to occupy this great marine; Spain was detached from the alliance against England; the north of Europe no longer required a force to watch it; and Great Britain might direct at once, towards the American coast, as many ships as the nature of the war could possibly demand.

As opposed to this unexampled naval power, America had on her list the following vessels, exclusive of gun-boats, *viz.* :—

Constitution,	44,	John Adams,	28,
President,	44,	Wasp,	18,
United States,	44,	Hornet,	18,
Congress,	38,	Argus,	16,
Constellation,	38,	Siren,	16,
Chesapeake,	38,	Oneida,	16,
New York,	36,	Vixen,	14,
Essex,	32,	Nautilus,	14,
Adams,	28,	Enterprise,	14,
Boston,	28,	Viper,	12.

Of these vessels, the New York, 36, and Boston, 28, were unseaworthy, and the Oneida, 16, was on Lake Ontario. The remainder were efficient for their rates, though the Adams required extensive repairs before she could be sent to sea. It follows that America was about to engage in a war with much the greatest maritime power that the world ever saw, possessing herself but seventeen cruising vessels on the ocean, of which nine were of a class less than frigates. At this time the merchant vessels of the United States were spread over the face of the entire earth. No other instance can be found of so great a stake in shipping with a protection so utterly inadequate.

If any evidence were wanting to show how much facts precede opinion in America, it would be amply furnished in this simple statement. Throughout the whole of the events we have been required to record, we have seen that the navy has followed the exigencies of the state, or the absolute demands of necessity, instead of having been created, fostered, and extended, as the cheapest, most efficient, and least

onerous means of defence, that a nation so situated could provide.

In addition to her vast superiority in ships, Great Britain possessed her islands in the West Indies, Bermuda, and Halifax, as ports for refitting, and places of refuge for prizes; while, on the part of America, though there were numerous ports, all were liable to be blockaded the moment an enemy might choose to send a force of two line-of-battle ships and one frigate to any given point; for it is not to be concealed that three two-decked ships could have driven the whole of the public cruising marine of America before them, at the time of which we are writing. Such was the condition of a great maritime people, on the eve of a serious war, and in defiance of the experience of a struggle, in which the men in power had been prominent actors!

There can be but one manner of accounting for this extraordinary state of things, that already mentioned of the belief of the impossibility of keeping vessels at sea, in face of the overwhelming force of Great Britain. It is in corroboration of this opinion, that a project was entertained by the cabinet of laying up all the vessels in ordinary, with a view to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy. This step would have been a death blow to the navy, for the people would have been perfectly justifiable in refusing to support a marine, that was intended solely for peace. It is now understood that this resolution was only prevented by the interference of two officers of the service, who happened to be at the seat of government when the subject was under discussion. These gentlemen * are said to have made a vigorous written remon-

* Capts. Bainbridge and Stewart. These two officers were shown orders to Com. Rodgers not to quit New York, but to keep the

strance against the scheme, and by means of their representations to have induced the cabinet to change its policy.

Under ordinary circumstances, the intention just stated would have been indicative of great feebleness of action, and of a narrowness of views, that was entirely unsuited to the characters of statesmen. But the circumstances were extraordinary. Not only was the marine of Great Britain much the most powerful of any in the world, but it was more powerful than those of all the rest of Christendom united. In addition to its actual physical force, it had created for itself a moral auxiliary that was scarcely less available in practice, than its guns and men. The reputation of invincibility was very generally attached to an English man-of-war, and perhaps no people gave England more ample credit for every species of superiority, whether physical or moral, that she claimed for herself, than those of the United States of America. The success of the British navy was indisputable; and as few Americans then read books, or journals, in foreign tongues, while scarcely a newspaper appeared without its columns containing some tribute to British glory, it would not be easy to pourtray the extent of the feeling,

vessels in port to form a part of its harbour defence. They sought an interview with the secretary, who was influenced by their representations, and who procured for them an audience of the president. Mr. Madison listened to the representations of the two captains, with attention, and observed that the experience of the Revolution confirmed their opinions. The cabinet was convened, but it adhered to its former advice. Capts. Bainbridge and Stewart, then addressed a strong letter to the president, who took on himself to change the plan. It is said, that one or two of the cabinet acceded to this decision, on the ground that the ships would soon be taken, and that the country would thus be rid of the cost of maintaining them, and at more liberty to direct its energies to the army.

or the amount of the credulity that generally existed on such subjects.

That the officers of the navy should, in a great degree, be superior to this dependent feeling was natural. They had enjoyed means of comparison that were denied the bulk of their fellow citizens, and the results had taught them more confidence in themselves. They knew that their ships were at least as good as those of England, that they sailed as fast, were worked as well, and, in every essential on which a seaman prides himself, that England could justly claim no other superiority than that which might be supposed to belong to her greater experience in naval warfare. Against this odds, they were willing to contend. Not so with the nation. Notwithstanding the best dispositions on the part of a vast majority of the American people, the conviction was general, that an American vessel of war would contend against an English vessel of war, with very few chances of success. After making every allowance for equality in all the other essentials, the great point of practice was against the former, and the confidence produced by a thousand victories, it was believed, would prove more available than zeal or courage.

It is not as easy to describe the feeling on the other side. Among the young officers of the British navy it is pretty safe to say that a notion of overwhelming superiority was very generally prevalent, but among the older men there were many who had studied the American cruisers with observant eyes, and a few who still recollected the war of the Revolution, when ill equipped, uncoppered, and half-manned ships, had rendered victory dear, and, not unfrequently, defeat certain. The journals of Great Britain indulged in

that coarse and impolitic abuse, which has probably done more towards raising a hostile feeling throughout Christendom against their nation, than any political injustice, or political jealousies; and the few ships of the American navy did not escape their sneers and misrepresentations. One of the very last of the vessels that they attempted to hold up to the derision of Europe, was the Constitution, a frigate that was termed "a bunch of pine boards," sailing "under a bit of striped bunting." As indecorous as was this language, and as little worthy as it might be to excite feeling, or comment, America was too keenly alive to English opinion, to hear it with indifference, and the day was at hand when she exultingly threw back these terms of reproach, with taunts and ridicule almost as unbecoming as the gibes that had provoked them.

There is little doubt that even the friends of the navy looked forward to the conflict with distrust, while the English felt a confidence that, of itself, was one step towards victory.

CHAPTER X.

War declared against Great Britain—The President and Belvidera—Chase of a fleet of Jamaica men—English squadron off New York—Capture of the Nautilus—The Constitution chased by English frigates—Escape of that vessel—Capture of an English Transport by the Essex—Capture of the Alert—The Constitution and Guerriere—Destruction of the latter vessel—Moral effect of the victory—Short-sighted naval policy.

ALLUSION has been made to the events which led to hostilities between America and England, though they belong to the political rather than to the naval history of the country. In the winter of 1812, a plot on the part of English agents, to sever the American Union, was revealed to the government; and, at a later day, the determination of the English ministry to adhere to her orders in council, was formally communicated to the president. At the same time, the claim to impress English seamen out of American ships on the high seas, was maintained in theory, while in practice, the outrage was constantly extended to natives; the boarding officers acting, in effect, on the unjust and perfectly illegal principle, that the seaman who failed to prove that he was an American, should be seized as an Englishman. Owing to these united causes, congress formally declared war against the king of Great Britain, on the 18th of June, 1812.

At the moment when this important intelligence was made public, nearly all of the little American

marine were either in port, or were cruising in the immediate vicinity of the coast. But a single ship, the Wasp, 18, Capt. Jones, was on foreign service, and she was on her return from Europe with despatches. It is however some proof that the government expected nothing more from its navy, than a few isolated exploits, that could produce no great influence on the main results of the contest, that the force the country actually possessed was not collected, and ordered to act in a body, during the short period that it would possess the advantage of assailing the enemy, while the latter was ignorant of the existence of hostilities. A squadron of three twenty-four pounder frigates, of as many eighteen-pounder vessels of the same class, and of eight or ten smaller cruisers, all effective, well manned, and admirably officered, might have been assembled, with a due attention to preparation. The enemy had but one two-decker, an old 64, on the American coast; and the force just mentioned, was quite sufficient to have blockaded both Halifax and Bermuda, for a month; or until the English received the intelligence of the war, and had time to reinforce from the West Indies. It has been said, that several hundred homeward-bound American vessels were at sea, at that moment, and in the event of a few straggling cruisers of the enemy's making prizes on the coast, there would have been no port at hand, into which they could have been sent, and a large proportion would probably have been recaptured by the American privateers that immediately covered the adjacent seas. Had the British cruisers collected, as indeed they did, under the impression that some such policy would be pursued, it would have been easy to destroy them, or at least to drive them into port, when

the same end would have been obtained in a different form.

But the declaration of war did not find the little marine of America in a condition to act in this combined, intelligent, and military manner. The vessels were scattered; some were undergoing repairs, others were at a distance; and, with the exception of one small squadron, every thing was virtually committed to the activity, judgment, and enterprise of the different captains. In the port of New York, were collected the President, 44, Com. Rodgers; Essex, 32, Capt. Porter; and Hornet, 18, Capt. Lawrence. These vessels were ready to sail at an hour's notice, except the Essex, which ship was overhauling her rigging, and re-stowing her hold. Com. Rodgers had dropped into the bay, with the President and Hornet, where he was joined by the United States, 44, Com. Decatur; Congress, 38, Capt. Smith; and Argus, 16, Lieut. Com. Sinclair, which arrived from the southward on the 21st of June.

Information had been received of the sailing of a large fleet of Jamaica-men, under protection of a strong force; and as these vessels would naturally be sweeping along the American coast, in the gulf stream, it was determined to make a dash at this convoy,—as judicious a plan, under the circumstances, as could then have been adopted. Within an hour after he had received official information of the declaration of war, together with his orders, Com. Rodgers was under way.

The squadron passed Sandy Hook on the afternoon of the 21st of June, and ran off south-east. That night an American was spoken, that had seen the Jamaica ships, and sail was instantly crowded in pursuit. On the 23rd, however, at 6 a. m., a sail was seen to the

northward and eastward, which was soon made out to be an enemy's frigate, and a general chase took place. The wind was fresh for the greater part of the day, and the enemy standing before it; the President, an uncommonly fast ship off the wind, soon gained, not only on the enemy, but on the rest of the squadron. About 4 p. m., she was within gun-shot of the chase, but the wind had unfortuately fallen, and the American ships being just out of port and deep, their greater comparative weight, under such circumstances, gave the enemy an advantage. Perceiving but very faint hopes of getting alongside of the stranger, unless he could cripple him, Com. Rodgers determined now to open on him, with his chase-guns. With this view, that officer went forward, himself, to direct the cannonade, and about half-past four the forecastle gun was discharged. This was the first hostile shot fired afloat in the war of 1812, and the gun is understood to have been pointed by Com. Rodgers in person*. The shot struck the chase in the rudder-coat, and drove through the stern frame into the gun-room. The next gun was fired from the first division below, and was pointed and discharged by Mr. Gamble, the second lieutenant, who commanded the battery. The shot struck the muzzle of one of the enemy's stern chasers, which it damaged. Com. Rodgers fired the third shot, which struck the stern of the chase, killed two men, badly wounded two more, and slightly wounded a lieutenant and two others. Mr. Gamble again fired, when the gun bursted. The shot flew abroad off on the

* As all the guns, at that time, went with locks, it is also probable that he pulled the lanyard.

President's bow, and the explosion killed and wounded sixteen men. The forecastle deck was blown up, and Com. Rodgers was thrown into the air, breaking a leg by the fall. This accident prevented the guns of that side from being used for some time. The pause enabled the enemy to open from four stern guns, otherwise he would have soon been driven from the after part of his ship. The fire of the chase was spirited and good, one of his shot plunging on the President's deck, killing a midshipman, and one or two men. The President shortly after began to yaw, with a view to cut away some of the chase's spars, and her fire soon compelled the latter to lighten. The enemy cut away his anchors, stove his boats, and threw them overboard, and started 14 tons of water. By these means he drew ahead, when about 7 o'clock the President hauled up, and as a last resort, fired three broadsides, most of the shot of which fell short.

Finding it impossible to get any nearer to the enemy, without rendering his own ships inefficient for a cruise, by lightening, Com. Rodgers ordered the pursuit to be finally abandoned, about midnight. It was afterwards known that the vessel chased was the Belvidera, 36, Capt. Byron, who deservedly gained much credit for the active manner in which he saved his ship. The Belvidera got into Halifax a few days later, carrying with her the news of the declaration of war. The President had 22 men killed and wounded on this occasion, 16 of whom suffered by the bursting of the gun. Among the former, was the midshipman mentioned; and among the latter, Mr. Gamble. The loss of the Belvidera was stated at seven killed and wounded by shot, and several others by accidents, Capt. Byron

included. She also suffered materially in her spars, sails, and rigging; while the injuries of this nature, received by the President, were not serious.

The squadron now hauled up to its course, in pursuit of the Jamaica-men; and, from time to time, intelligence was obtained from American vessels, of the course the fleet was steering. On the 1st of July, the pursuing ships fell in with large quantities of the shells of cocoa-nuts, orange peels, &c. &c., which gave an assurance that they had struck the wake of the Englishmen. This was a little to the eastward of the Banks of Newfoundland, and the strongest hopes were entertained of coming up with the fleet before it could reach the channel. On the 9th of July, an English letter of marque was captured by the Hornet, Capt. Lawrence, and her master reported that he had seen the Jamaica vessels the previous evening, under the convoy of a two-decked ship, a frigate, a sloop of war, and a brig. He had counted 85 sail. All possible means were now used to force the squadron a-head, but without success, no further information having been received of the fleet. The chase was continued until the 13th, when, being within a day's run of the chops of the channel, Com. Rodgers stood to the southward, passing Madeira, and going into Boston by the way of the Western Islands and the Grand Banks.

This cruise was singularly unfortunate, for such a moment, although the ships were kept in the direct tracks of vessels in crossing the ocean, each time. Seven merchantmen were taken, however, and one American was recaptured. The squadron was absent on this service seventy days.

The report of the Belvidera induced the enemy to collect as many of his vessels in squadron as possible;

and a force consisting of the Africa, 64, Capt. Bastard; Shannon, 38, Capt. Broke; Guerriere, 38, Capt. Dacres; Belvidera, 36, Capt. Byron; and Æolus, 32, Capt. Lord James Townsend, was soon united, in the hope of falling in with Com. Rodgers. Of this squadron, Capt. Broke, of the Shannon, was the senior officer. It appeared off New York early in July, where it made several captures. The Nautilus, 14, Lieut. Com. Crane, had arrived in the port of New York, shortly after the squadron of Com. Rodgers had sailed; and this little brig went out, with an intention of cruising in the track of the English Indiamen, at the unfortunate moment when Capt. Broke appeared off the coast. The Nautilus got to sea quite early in July, and fell in with the British squadron the next day. A short but vigorous chase succeeded, in which Mr. Crane threw overboard his lee-guns, and did all that a seaman could devise to escape, but the Nautilus buried, while the frigates of the enemy were enabled to carry every thing to advantage, and he struck to the Shannon. The Nautilus was the first vessel of war taken on either side in this contest, and thus the service lost one of those cruisers which had become endeared to it, and identified with its history, in connexion with the war before Tripoli*. The enemy took out the officers and people of their prize, threw a crew into her, and continued to cruise, in the hope of meeting the American ships. Leaving them thus employed, it will now be necessary to return to port in quest of another cruiser to occupy their attention.

* The Enterprise, Nautilus, and Vixen, were originally schooners, but they had all been rigged into brigs, previously to the war of 1812. The Nautilus, it will be remembered, was the vessel commanded by the regretted and chivalrous Somers.

The Constitution, 44, Capt. Hull, had gone into the Chesapeake, on her return from Europe, and shipping a new crew, on the 12th of July she sailed from Annapolis, and cruised to the northward. Friday, July the 17th, the ship was out of sight of land, though at no great distance from the coast, with a light breeze from the N. E., and under easy canvass. At one, she sounded in 22 fathoms; and about an hour afterwards, four sail were made in the northern board, heading to the westward. At three, the Constitution made sail, and tacked in 18½ fathoms. At four, she discovered a fifth sail to the northward and eastward, which had the appearance of a vessel of war. This ship subsequently proved to be the Guerriere, 38, Capt. Dacres. By this time, the other four sail were made out to be three ships and a brig; they bore N. N. W., and were all on the starboard tack, apparently in company. The wind now became very light, and the Constitution hauled up her main-sail. The ship in the eastern board, however, had so far altered her position by six, as to bear E. N. E., the wind having hitherto been fair for her to close. But at a quarter past six, the wind came out light at the southward, bringing the American ship to windward. The Constitution now wore round with her head to the eastward, set her light studding-sails and stay-sails, and at half-past seven beat to quarters, and cleared for action, with the intention of speaking the nearest vessel.

The wind continued very light at the southward, and the two vessels were slowly closing until eight. At ten, the Constitution shortened sail, and immediately after she showed the private signal of the day. After keeping the lights aloft near an hour, and getting no answer from the Guerriere, the Constitution, at a

quarter-past eleven, lowered the signal, and made sail again, hauling aboard her starboard tacks. During the whole of the middle watch the wind was very light, from the southward and westward. Just as the morning watch was called, the Guerriere tacked, then wore entirely round, threw a rocket, and fired two guns. As the day opened, three sail were discovered on the starboard quarter of the Constitution, and three more astern. At five, a. m., a fourth vessel was seen astern.

This was the squadron of Com. Broke, which had been gradually closing with the American frigate during the night, and was now just out of gun-shot. As the ships slowly varied their positions, when the mists were entirely cleared away, the Constitution had two frigates on her lee quarter, and a ship of the line, two frigates, a brig, and a schooner astern. The names of the enemy's ships have already been given; but the brig was the Nautilus, and the schooner another prize. All the strangers had English colours flying.

It now fell quite calm, and the Constitution hoisted out her boats, and sent them a-head to tow, with a view to keep the ship out of the reach of the enemy's shot. At the same time she whipt up one of the gun-deck guns to the spar-deck, and run it out aft, as a stern chaser, getting a long eighteen off the forecastle also, for a similar purpose. Two more of the twenty-fours below were run out at the cabin windows, with the same object, though it was found necessary to cut away some of the wood-work of the stern frame, in order to make room.

By six o'clock the wind, which continued very light and baffling, came out from the northward of west, when the ship's head was got round to the southward, and all the light canvass that would draw was set. Soon

after, the nearest frigate, the Shannon, opened with her bow guns, and continued firing for about ten minutes; but perceiving she could not reach the Constitution, she ceased. At half-past six, Capt. Hull sounded in 26 fathoms, when, finding that the enemy was likely to close, as he was enabled to put the boats of two ships on one, and was also favoured by a little more air than the Constitution, all the spare rope that could be found, and which was fit for the purpose, was payed down into the cutters, bent on, and a kedge was run out near half a mile a-head, and let go. At a signal given, the crew clapped on, and walked away with the ship, overrunning and tripping the kedge as she came up with the end of the line. While this was doing, fresh lines and another kedge was carried a-head, and in this manner, though out of sight of land, the frigate had glided away from her pursuers before they discovered the manner in which it was done. It was not long, however, before the enemy resorted to the same expedient. At half-past seven, the Constitution had a little air, when she set her ensign, and fired a shot at the Shannon, the nearest ship astern. At eight, it fell calm again, and further recourse was had to the boats and the kedges, the enemy's vessels having a light air and drawing a-head, towing, sweeping, and kedging. By nine the nearest frigate, the Shannon, on which the English had put most of their boats, was closing fast, and there was every prospect, notwithstanding the steadiness and activity of the Constitution's people, that the frigate just mentioned would get near enough to cripple her, when her capture by the rest of the squadron would be inevitable. At this trying moment the best spirit prevailed in the ship. Every thing was stoppered, and Capt. Hull was not without hopes, even

should he be forced into action, of throwing the Shannon astern by his fire, and of maintaining his distance from the other vessels. It was known that the enemy could not tow very near, as it would have been easy to sink his boats with the stern guns of the Constitution, and not a man in the latter vessel showed a disposition to despondency. Officers and men relieved each other regularly at the duty, and while the former threw themselves down on deck to catch short naps, the people slept at their guns.

This was one of the most critical moments of the chase. The Shannon was fast closing, as has been just stated, while the Guerriere was almost as near on the larboard quarter. An hour promised to bring the struggle to an issue, when, suddenly, at nine minutes past nine, a light air from the southward struck the ship, bringing her to windward. The beautiful manner in which this advantage was improved, excited admiration even in the enemy. As the breeze was seen coming the ship's sails were trimmed, and as soon as she was under command, she was brought close up to the wind, on the larboard tack; the boats were all dropped in alongside; those that belonged to the davits were run up, while the others were just lifted clear of the water, by purchases on the spare spars, stowed outboard, where they were in readiness to be used again at a moment's notice. As the ship came by the wind, she brought the Guerriere nearly on her lee beam, when that frigate opened a fire from her broadside. While the shot of this vessel were just falling short of them, the people of the Constitution were hoisting up their boats with as much steadiness as if the duty was performing in a friendly port. In about an hour, however, it fell nearly calm again, when Capt.

Hull ordered a quantity of the water started to lighten the ship. More than two thousand gallons were pumped out, and the boats were sent a-head again to tow. The enemy now put nearly all his boats on the Shannon, the nearest ship a-stern; and a few hours of prodigious exertion followed, the people of the Constitution being compelled to supply the place of numbers by their activity and zeal. The ships were close by the wind, and every thing that would draw was set, and the Shannon was slowly, but steadily, forging a-head. About noon of this day, there was a little relaxation from labour, owing to the occasional occurrence of cat's-paws, by watching which, closely, the ship was urged through the water. But at a quarter past twelve, the boats were again sent a-head, and the toilsome work of towing and kedging was renewed.

At one o'clock a strange sail was discovered nearly to leeward. At this moment the four frigates of the enemy were about one point on the lee-quarter of the Constitution, at long gun shot, the Africa and the two prizes being on the lee-beam. As the wind was constantly baffling, any moment might have brought a change, and placed the enemy to windward. At seven minutes before two, the Belvidera, then the nearest ship, began to fire with her bow-guns, and the Constitution opened with her stern chasers. On board the latter ship, however, it was soon found to be dangerous to use the main-deck guns, the transoms having so much rake, the windows being so high, and the guns so short, that every explosion lifted the upper deck, and threatened to blow out the stern frame. Perceiving, moreover, that his shot did little or no execution, Capt. Hull ordered the firing to cease at half-past two.

For several hours the enemy's frigates were now

within gun-shot, sometimes towing and kedging, and at others endeavouring to close with the puffs of air that occasionally passed. At seven in the evening, the boats of the Constitution were again a-head, the ship steering S. W. ½ W., with an air so light as to be almost imperceptible. At half-past seven she sounded in 24 fathoms. For four hours the same toilsome duty was going on, until a little before eleven, when a light air from the southward struck the ship, and the sails, for the first time in many weary hours, were asleep. The boats instantly dropped alongside, hooked on, and were all run up, with the exception of the first cutter. The top-gallant studding-sails and stay-sails were set as soon as possible, and for about an hour the people caught a little rest.

But at midnight it fell nearly calm again, though neither the pursuers nor the pursued had recourse to the boats, probably from an unwillingness to disturb their crews. At two, a. m., it was observed on board the Constitution that the Guerriere had forged a-head, and was again off their lee beam. At this time, the top-gallant studding-sails were taken in.

In this manner passed the night, and on the morning of the next day, it was found that three of the enemy's frigates were within long gun-shot on the lee-quarter, and the other at about the same distance on the lee-beam. The Africa, and the prizes, were much farther to leeward.

A little after day-light, the Guerriere, having drawn a-head sufficiently to be forward of the Constitution's beam, tacked, when the latter ship did the same, in order to preserve her position to windward. An hour later the Æolus passed on the contrary tack, so near that it was thought by some who observed the move-

ment, that she ought to have opened her fire; but, as that vessel was merely a twelve-pounder frigate, and she was still at a considerable distance, it is quite probable her commander acted judiciously. By this time, there was sufficient wind to induce Captain Hull to hoist in his first cutter.

The scene on the morning of this day was very beautiful, and of great interest to the lovers of nautical exhibitions. The weather was mild and lovely, the sea smooth as a pond, and there was quite wind enough to remove the necessity of any of the extraordinary means of getting a-head, that had been so freely used during the previous eight-and-forty hours. All the English vessels had got on the same tack with the Constitution again, and the five frigates were clouds of canvass, from their trucks to the water. Including the American ship, eleven sail were in sight, and shortly after a twelfth appeared to windward, that was soon ascertained to be an American merchantman. But the enemy were too intent on the Constitution to regard any thing else, and though it would have been easy to capture the ships to leeward, no attention appears to have been paid to them. With a view, however, to deceive the ship to windward, they hoisted American colours, when the Constitution set an English ensign, by way of warning the stranger to keep aloof.

Until ten o'clock the Constitution was making every preparation for carrying sail hard, should it become necessary, and she sounded in twenty-five fathoms. At noon the wind fell again; though it was found, that while the breeze lasted, she had gained on all of the enemy's ships; more, however, on some, than on others. The nearest vessel was the Belvidera, which was exactly in the wake of the Constitution, distant

about two and a-half miles, bearing W. N. W. The nearest frigate to leeward bore N. by W. ½ W. distant three or three and a-half miles; the two other frigates were on the lee-quarter, distant about five miles, and the Africa was hull down to leeward, on the opposite tack.

This was a vast improvement on the state of things that had existed the day previously, and it allowed the officers and men to catch a little rest, though no one left the decks. The latitude by observation this day was 38°, 47° N., and the longitude by dead reckoning 73°, 57 W.

At meridian the wind began to blow a pleasant breeze, and the sound of the water rippling under the bows of the vessel was again heard. From this moment the noble old ship slowly drew a-head of all her pursuers, the sails being watched and tended in the best manner that consummate seamanship could dictate, until four p. m., when the Belvidera was more than four miles astern, and the other vessels were thrown behind in the same proportion, though the wind had again got to be very light.

In this manner both parties kept pressing a-head, and to windward, as fast as circumstances would allow, profiting by every change, and resorting to all the means of forcing vessels through the water, that are known to seamen. At a little before seven, however, there was every appearance of a heavy squall, accompanied by rain; when the Constitution prepared to meet it with the coolness and discretion she had displayed throughout the whole affair. The people were stationed, and every thing was kept fast to the last moment, when, just before the squall struck the ship, the order was given to clew up and clew down.

All the light canvass was furled, a second reef was taken in the mizen-topsail, and the ship was brought under short sail, in an incredibly little time. The English vessels, observing this, began to let go and haul down without waiting for the wind, and when they were shut in by the rain, they were steering in different directions to avoid the force of the expected squall. The Constitution, on the other hand, no sooner got its weight, than she sheeted home and hoisted her fore and main-top-gallant sails, and while the enemy most probably believed her to be borne down by the pressure of the wind, steering free, she was flying away from them, on an easy bowline, at the rate of eleven knots.

In a little less than an hour after the squall had struck the ship, it had entirely passed to leeward, and a sight was again obtained of the enemy. The Belvidera, the nearest vessel, had altered her bearings, in that short period, nearly two points more to leeward, and she was a long way astern. The next nearest vessel was still further to leeward, and more distant, while the two remaining frigates were fairly hull down. The Africa was barely visible in the horizon!

All apprehensions of the enemy now ceased, though sail was carried to increase the distance, and to preserve the weather gauge. At half-past ten, the wind backed further to the southward, when the Constitution, which had been steering free for some time, took in her lower studding sails. At eleven, the enemy fired two guns, and the nearest ship could just be discovered. As the wind baffled, and continued light, the enemy still persevered in the chase, but at day-light the nearest vessel was hull down astern and to leeward. Under the circumstances it was deemed prudent to use every

exertion to lose sight of the English frigates; and the wind falling light, the Constitution's sails were wet down from the sky-sails to the courses. The good effects of this care were soon visible, as at six a. m. the top-sails of the enemy's nearest vessels were beginning to dip. At a quarter-past eight, the English ships all hauled to the northward and eastward, fully satisfied, by a trial that had lasted nearly three days and as many nights, under all the circumstances that can attend naval manœuvres, from reefed top-sails to kedging, that they had no hope of overtaking their enemy.

Thus terminated a chase, that has become historical in the American navy, for its length, closeness, and activity. On the part of the English, there were manifested much perseverance and seamanship, a ready imitation, and a strong desire to get alongside of their enemy. But the glory of the affair was carried off by the officers and people of the Constitution. Throughout all the trying circumstances of this arduous struggle, this noble frigate, which had so lately been the subject of the sneers of the English critics, maintained the high character of a man-of-war. Even when pressed upon the hardest, nothing was hurried, confused, or slovenly, but the utmost steadiness, order, and discipline reigned in the ship. A cool, discreet, and gallant commander, was nobly sustained by his officers; and there cannot be a doubt that had the enemy succeeded in getting any one of their frigates fairly under the fire of the American ship, that she would have been very roughly treated. The escape itself, is not so much a matter of admiration, as the manner in which it was effected. A little water was pumped out, it is true; and perhaps this was necessary, in order to put

a vessel fresh from port on a level, in light winds and calms, with ships that had been cruising some time; but not an anchor was cut away, not a boat stove, nor a gun lost. The steady and man-of-war like style in which the Constitution took in all her boats, as occasions offered; the order and rapidity with which she kedged, and the vigilant seamanship with which she was braced up, and eased off, extorted admiration among the more liberal of her pursuers. In this affair, the ship, no less than those who worked her, gained a high reputation, if not with the world generally, at least with those who, perhaps, as seldom err in their nautical criticisms as any people living.

The English relinquished their pursuit at eight a. m., and at half-past eight the Constitution, discovering a vessel on her starboard bow, made sail in chase. At three quarters past nine brought to, and spoke an American brig. At ten made sail again in chase of another vessel on the lee bow, which also proved to be an American, bound in. At meridian hoisted in the boat used in boarding, took a second reef in the top-sails, and stood to the eastward, the ship going into Boston near the middle of the same month.

A few days after the chase of the Constitution, the English squadron separated, the Africa returning to port with the prisoners and prizes, and the frigates shaping their courses in different directions, in the hope that the ship which had avoided them so carefully when in company, might be less averse to meeting either singly.

The Essex, 32, Capt. Porter, got to sea from New York, not long after the departure of Com. Rodgers, and went first to the southward. She made several prizes early, destroying most of them, and receiving

the prisoners on board. The weather now compelled the Essex to run to the northward. When a few weeks from port, a small fleet was approached at night, which was immediately understood to be enemies. The English ships were steering to the northward, before the wind, and the Essex was stretching towards them, on an easy bowline, and under short canvass The night had a dull moon, and it wanted but an hour or two to day-light. As the Essex drew near, it was perceived that the English were sailing in very open order, with considerable intervals between them, and that the convoying ship, a large vessel, was some distance a-head, and of course to leeward.

As it was the intention of Capt. Porter to preserve the weather gauge, until he ascertained who and what the convoy might be, he stretched in towards the sternmost ship of the strangers, which he spoke. At this time, the people of the Essex were at their guns, with every thing ready to engage, but keeping the men on deck concealed, and having their lower ports in. After some conversation with the first vessel, it was ascertained that the fleet consisted of a few transports, under the convoy of a frigate and bomb-vessel, when Capt. Porter determined to get alongside of the former, if possible, and to carry her by surprise. With this view, the Essex shot a-head, leaving the first vessel, apparently without exciting her suspicions. On ranging up close a-beam of a second, some further discourse passed, when the Englishman so far took the alarm, as to announce an intention to make the signal of a stranger's having joined the fleet. It became necessary therefore, to throw aside disguise, and to order the transport to haul out of the convoy, under the penalty of being fired into. This was done

quietly, and seemingly without attracting the attention of the rest of the fleet, which, of course, passed to leeward. On taking possession of her prize, the Essex found her filled with soldiers, and so much time was necessarily consumed in securing the latter, that the day dawned, and it became inexpedient to renew the attempt on the convoy. The frigate was said to be the Minerva, 36, and the troops in the convoy amounted to about 1000 men. About 150 were taken in the prize.

A few days after this success, the Essex made a strange sail to windward. At the moment, the frigate was disguised as a merchantman, having her gun-deck ports in, top-gallant masts housed, and sails trimmed in a slovenly manner. Deceived by these appearances, the stranger came running down free, when the American ship showed her ensign and kept away, under short sail. This emboldened the stranger, who followed, and having got on the weather quarter of his chase, he began his fire, setting English colours. The Essex now knocked out her ports, and opened upon the enemy, who appears to have been so much taken by surprise, that after receiving one or two discharges, his people deserted their quarters, and ran below. In eight minutes after the Essex had begun to fire, the English ship struck. On sending Lieut. Finch * on board to take possession, the prize proved to be his Britannic Majesty's ship Alert, Capt. Laugharne, mounting 20 eighteen-pound carronades, and with a full crew. Mr. Finch found seven feet of water in the Alert, and was obliged to wear round, to keep her from sinking.

The Alert was the first vessel of war taken from the English in this contest, and her resistance was so feeble

* Now Capt. Bolton.

as to excite surprise. It was not to be expected, certainly, that a ship carrying eighteen-pound carronades, could successfully resist a ship carrying thirty-two-pound carronades, and double her number of guns and men; but so exaggerated had become the opinion of British prowess on the ocean, that impossibilities were sometimes looked for. As it is understood that only a part of the Essex's guns bore on the Alert, the manner in which the latter was taken, must be attributed to a sudden panic among her people, some of whom were executed for deserting their quarters, after their exchange. The officers appear to have behaved well. The Alert had but three men wounded, and the Essex sustained no injury at all.

Capt. Porter, with the addition made by the crew of the Alert, had many prisoners, and as he was apprised of their intention to rise, in the event of an engagement, he felt the necessity of getting rid of them. He accordingly entered into an arrangement with Capt. Laugharne, to convert the Alert, which was a large ship bought for the service, into a cartel, and to send her into St. John's. This project, so favourable to the American interests, was successfully accomplished; and it is due to his character to say, that the officer in command at Newfoundland, Admiral Sir J. T. Duckworth, while he protested against the course, as unusual and injurious to a nation like England, which had so many cruisers at sea, by depriving her of the chances of recapture, honourably complied with the conditions entered into by his inferior.

The Essex continued to cruise to the southward of the Grand Banks. On two occasions, she fell in with enemy's frigates, and at one time was so hard pressed, as to be reduced to the necessity of making every pre-

paration to carry one by boarding in the night, since, another English vessel of war being in company, an engagement in the usual manner would have been indiscreet. The arrangements made on board the Essex, on this occasion, are still spoken of with admiration, by those who were in the ship, and there is great reason to think they would have succeeded, had the vessels met. By some accident, that has never been explained, the ships passed each other in the darkness, and shortly after, the Essex came into the Delaware to replenish her water and stores.

In the meanwhile, the Constitution was not idle. Remaining at Boston a short time after his celebrated chase, Capt. Hull sailed again on the 2nd of August, standing along the land to the eastward, in the hope of falling in with some of the enemy's cruisers, that were thought to be hovering on the coast. The ship ran down, near the land, as far as the Bay of Fundy, without seeing any thing, when she went off Halifax and Cape Sable, with the same want of success. Capt. Hull now determined to go farther east, and he went near the Isle of Sables, and thence to the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to intercept vessels bound to Halifax or Quebec. Here two prizes, of little value, were taken and burned. On the morning of the 15th, five sail were made, one of which was a sloop of war. The Constitution gave chase, and the enemy soon set one of his vessels, a prize brig, on fire. The chases now separated, and the sloop of war being to windward, the Constitution followed a ship, which turned out to be an Englishman, already a prize to an American privateer. This vessel had been spoken by the sloop of war, but the appearance of the Constitution prevented her recapture. A brig was next chased to

leeward, and proved to be an American, with a prize crew on board. She was retaken, and sent in. The remainder of the vessels escaped.

The Constitution next stood to the southward, and on the 19th, at two p. m., in lat. 41° 41', long 55° 48', a sail was made from the mast heads, bearing E. S. E., and to leeward, though the distance prevented her character from being discovered. The Constitution immediately made sail in chase, and at three, the stranger was ascertained to be a ship on the starboard tack, under easy canvass, and close hauled. Half an hour later, she was distinctly made out to be a frigate, and no doubt was entertained of her being an enemy. The American ship kept running free until she was within a league of the frigate to leeward, when she began to shorten sail. By this time the enemy had laid his main-top-sail aback in waiting for the Constitution to come down, with every thing ready to engage. Perceiving that the Englishman sought a combat, Capt. Hull made his own preparations with the greater deliberation. The Constitution, consequently, furled her top-gallant-sails, and stowed all her light stay-sails and flying jib. Soon after she took a second reef in the topsails, hauled up the courses, sent down royal yards, cleared for action, and beat to quarters. At five, the chase hoisted three English ensigns, and immediately after she opened her fire, at long gun-shot, wearing several times, to rake and prevent being raked. The Constitution occasionally yawed as she approached to avoid being raked, and she fired a few guns as they bore, but her aim was not to commence the action seriously, until quite close.

At six o'clock, the enemy bore up and ran off, under his three topsails and jib, with the wind on his quarter.

As this was an indication of a readiness to receive his antagonist in a fair yard-arm-and-yard-arm fight, the Constitution immediately set her main-top-gallant sail and fore-sail, to get alongside. At a little after six, the bows of the American frigate began to double on the quarter of the English ship, when she opened with her forward guns, drawing slowly ahead, with her greater way, both vessels keeping up a close and heavy fire, as their guns bore. In about ten minutes, or just as the ships were fairly side by side, the mizen-mast of the Englishman was shot away, when the American passed slowly ahead, keeping up a tremendous fire, and luffed short round his bows, to prevent being raked. In executing this manœuvre, the ship shot into the wind, got stern-way, and fell foul of her antagonist. While in this situation, the cabin of the Constitution took fire, from the close explosion of the forward guns of the enemy, who obtained a small, but momentary advantage from his position. The good conduct of Mr. Hoffman*, who commanded in the cabin, soon repaired this accident, and a gun of the enemy's, that threatened further injury, was disabled.

As the vessels touched, both parties prepared to board. The English turned all hands up from below, and mustered forward, with that object, while Mr. Morris, the first lieutenant, Mr. Alwyn, the master, and Mr. Bush, the lieutenant of marines, sprang upon the taffrail of the Constitution, with a similar intention. Both sides now suffered by the closeness of the musketry; the English much the most, however. Mr. Morris was shot through the body, but maintained his

* Beekman Verplanck Hoffman, the fourth lieutenant of the Constitution, a gentleman of New York, who died in 1834, a captain.

post, the bullet fortunately missing the vitals. Mr. Alwyn was wounded in the shoulder, and Mr. Bush fell dead, by a bullet through the head. It being found impossible for either party to board, in the face of such a fire, and with the heavy sea that was on, the sails were filled, and just as the Constitution shot ahead, the fore-mast of the enemy fell, carrying down with it his main-mast, and leaving him wallowing in the trough of the sea, a helpless wreck.

The Constitution now hauled aboard her tacks, ran off a short distance, secured her masts, and rove new rigging. At seven, she wore round, and taking a favourable position for raking, a jack that had been kept flying on the stump of the mizen-mast of the enemy, was lowered. Mr. George Campbell Read*, the third lieutenant, was sent on board the prize, and the boat soon returned with the report that the captured vessel was the Guerriere, 38, Capt. Dacres, one of the ships that had so lately chased the Constitution, off New York.

The Constitution kept wearing, to remain near her prize, and at two a. m., a strange sail was seen closing, when she cleared for action; but at three, the stranger stood off. At day-light, the officer in charge hailed, to say that the Guerriere had four feet water in her hold, and that there was danger of her sinking. On receiving this information, Capt. Hull sent all his boats to remove the prisoners. Fortunately, the weather was moderate, and by noon this duty was nearly ended. At three p. m., the prize crew was recalled, having set the wreck on fire, and in a quarter of an hour she blew up. Finding himself filled with wounded prisoners,

* Com. Read, at present in command of the East India squadron.

Capt. Hull now returned to Boston, where he arrived on the 30th of the same month.

It is not easy, at this distant day, to convey to the reader the full force of the moral impression created in America by this victory of one frigate over another. So deep had been the effect produced on the public mind by the constant accounts of the successes of the English over their enemies at sea, that the opinion, already mentioned, of their invincibility on that element, generally prevailed; and it had been publicly predicted, that, before the contest had continued six months, British sloops of war would lie alongside of American frigates with comparative impunity. Perhaps the only portion of even the American population that expected different results, was that which composed the little body of officers on whom the trial would fall, and they looked forward to the struggle with a manly resolution. rather than with a very confident hope*. But the termination of the combat just related, far exceeded the expectations of even the most sanguine. After making all proper allowance for the difference of force, which certainly existed in favour of the Constitution, as well as for the excuses that the defeated party freely offered to the world, men on both sides of the Atlantic, who were competent to form intelligent opinions on such

* About two months before war was declared, the officers of two of the frigates passed an evening together, when the subject of what would be the probable result of a conflict between American and English ships, was seriously and temperately discussed. The conclusion was, that, in the judgment of these gentlemen, at that interesting moment, their own chances of victory were *at least* equal to those of the enemy. On the other hand, General Moreau, when witnessing the evolutions of some American ships in port, about the same time, after expressing his admiration of their appearance, gave an opinion that it was impossible men so inexperienced should prevail over English vessels.

subjects, saw the promise of many future successes in this. The style in which the Constitution had been handled; the deliberate and yet earnest manner in which she had been carried into battle; the extraordinary execution that had been made in so short a time by her fire; the readiness and gallantry with which she had cleared for action, so soon after destroying one British frigate, in which was manifested a disposition to meet another, united to produce a deep conviction of self-reliance, coolness, and skill, that was of infinitely more weight than the transient feeling which might result from any accidental triumph.

In this combat, the Constitution suffered a good deal in her rigging and sails, but very little in her hull. Her loss was 7 killed, and 7 wounded. As soon as she had rove new rigging, applied the necessary stoppers, and bent a few sails, as has been seen, she was ready to engage another frigate. On the other hand, the Guerriere was completely dismasted, had 79 men killed and wounded, and, according to the statement of her commander in his defence, before the court which tried him for the loss of his ship, she had received no less than thirty shot as low as five sheets of copper beneath the bends! All this execution had been done between the time when the ships opened their fire abeam, and the moment when the Guerriere's masts fell; for the few shot thrown by the Constitution, previously to the first event, were virtually of no use, and, subsequently to the last, she did not discharge a gun. The whole period between the time when the Guerriere commenced her fire at long shot, and that when she actually hauled down her jack, something like two hours, was included in the enemy's accounts of the duration of the combat; but it is well understood

by professional men, that, in truth, the battle was decided in about a fourth of that time.

It was natural that a success so brilliant and unexpected should produce a reaction in public feeling; and in dwelling on their victory, exaggerated and vain-glorious boastings mingled in the exultation of the American journals of the period, while illiberal and fraudulent detraction made up the accounts of a portion of the English writers, when apologizing for the defeat. As is usual, on such occasions, each side endeavoured to make the most of circumstances; and it is the province of the historian to correct, as far as it is in his power, these misrepresentations and mistakes. That the Constitution was a larger and a heavier ship than the Guerriere, will be disputed by no nautical man, though it is believed that the actual difference between these vessels was considerably less than might be inferred from their respective rates. It is understood that the Guerriere was nearly as long a ship as her adversary, and it has been asserted on respectable authority, that she was actually pierced for 54 guns, though it is admitted that she had but 49 mounted in the action, one of which was a light boat carronade*. Her gun-deck metal was eighteen-pounders, and her carronades, like those of the Constitution, were thirty-twos. The Guerriere was a French-built ship, but we have no means of ascertaining whether her guns were, or were not, French eighteens. If the latter, her shot of this denomination would have weighed near 19½ pounds, while, at

* It is stated on authority deemed worthy of credit, that the Guerriere was pierced for 30 guns on the gun-deck, but that she had no bridle-port below. Five ports that could have been fought in broadside, are said to have been empty on board the Guerriere, when the Americans took possession.

that period, it is believed that the 24 pound shot of America seldom much exceeded 22 pounds. Some experiments made at the time, are said to have shown that the difference between the metal of these two ships was much less than would have appeared from the nominal power of their guns*. The great inferiority of the Guerriere, certainly, was in her men. Capt. Dacres, whose authority on this point there is no reason to question, says that he mustered but 263 souls at quarters, in consequence of the absence of one lieutenant, two midshipmen, and a part of his people in prizes. He also admits the important fact that there were several Americans among his crew, who refused to fight, and, much to his credit, he permitted them to go below. This number has been stated at ten, in other British accounts.

After making every allowance that was claimed by the enemy, the character of this victory is not essentially altered. Its peculiarities were a fine display of seamanship in the approach, extraordinary efficiency in the attack, and great readiness in repairing damages; all of which denote cool and capable officers, with an expert and trained crew; in a word, a disciplined man-of-war†. Observant men compared the injury done to the Guerriere in thirty minutes, and part of that

* An officer of the Constitution, of experience and of great respectability, who is now dead, assured the writer that he actually weighed the shot of both ships, and found that the Constitution's 24s were only three pounds heavier than the Guerriere's 18s, and that there was nearly the same difference in favour of the latter's 32s. The writer has elsewhere given the result of his own investigations on this subject, made, however, some years after the war. He never found an English shot over-weight, though most of the American shot fell short.

† Whatever may have been its conduct, and it was excellent in the chase and in the engagement, the crew of the Constitution was actually new, her men having been shipped just before the war.

time with the ships foul, in a situation that compelled the Constitution to withhold her fire, with that done to the Chesapeake, an unresisting vessel, in fifteen minutes; the first, too, occurring in rough, and the last in smooth water, with every advantage of position. While the mass of the nation perceived that the notion of British invincibility was absurd, and, perhaps, began to expect impossibilities, this portion of the observers, with justice, foresaw that America had only to put forth her power in earnest, to assert the freedom of the seas in a manner to command respect.

Capt. Dacres lost no professional reputation by his defeat. He had handled his ship in a manner to win the applause of his enemies, fought her gallantly, and only submitted when further resistance would have been as culpable as, in fact, it was impossible. Less can be said in favour of the efficiency of the Guerriere's batteries, which were not equal to the mode of fighting that had been introduced by her antagonist, and which, in fact, was the commencement of a new era in combats between single ships.

We have dwelt at length on the circumstances connected with this action, not only because it was the first serious conflict of the war, but because it was characterised by features which, though novel at the time, became identified with nearly all the subsequent engagements of the contest, showing that they were intimately connected with the discipline and system of the American marine.

Capt. Hull, having performed the two handsome exploits recorded, now gave up the command of his frigate, with a feeling that was highly creditable to him, in order to allow others an equal chance to distinguish themselves, there being unfortunately many

more captains than vessels in the navy, at that trying moment. Capt. Bainbridge was named to be his successor, being transferred from the Constellation, 38, then fitting for sea at Washington, to the Constitution.

As Capt. Bainbridge was one of the oldest officers of his rank in the service, he was given a command consisting of his own ship, the Essex, 32, and the Hornet, 18. He hoisted his broad pennant on board the Constitution, accordingly, on the 15th of September, at Boston. Capt. Stewart, lately returned from a furlough, was appointed to the Constellation, 38, and Mr. Charles Morris, the first lieutenant of the Constitution in the chase, and in the battle, was shortly after promoted to the rank of captain, passing the step of master-commandant, as had been the case with Com. Decatur. This was the second time this officer had been promoted for his conduct in battle, and he probably owed his present elevation over the heads of his seniors, to this circumstance, coupled with the fact that his wound in the late action had so nearly been fatal.

Whatever may have been the merits of the officer who was the subject of this exercise of executive power, and they are known to be of a very high order, there is little question that the precedent set, not only in his case, but in that of Capt. Decatur, is of a very dangerous character. No general rule can be safer than to promote the first lieutenant of a victorious ship; for the efficiency of a man of war depends as much on this officer as on her commander, and while it may be no more than an act of justice, it is an incentive to constant preparation; but no policy can be weaker than that which deprives many of their self-respect and just professional pride, in order to reward the services

and sustain the hopes of one. The policy of the navy has been characterised by acts of this vacillating and short-sighted nature; and thus it is that we have so long seen veterans lingering in the stations that they have held for near forty years, through the neglect of the proper authorities to create a new and superior rank, in contrast to occasional and indiscreet exercises of patronage that have overstepped the bounds of discretion. These irregularities, in which there is excess of favour on one side, with denials of justice on another, are the fruits of the influence of popular feeling over a corps, that being necessarily subjected, in its ordinary duties, to the rigid exactions of martial law, is entitled, at all times, to have its interests protected by a uniform, consistent, rigidly just, and high-toned code of civil regulations. It is not the least of the merits of the American marine, that it has earned its high reputation in despite of the various disadvantages of this nature, under which it has laboured*.

* In the end, the promotion of Capt. Morris made but little difference in his position in the service, except as regards the lieutenants, an advantage very properly obtained, most of the masters and commanders regaining their relative ranks on promotion. One, however, Capt. Ludlow, a very respectable officer, was induced to resign.

CHAPTER XI.

Neglect of the navy—Capture of the Macedonian by the United States—Cruise of the Argus—Action between the Frolic and the Wasp—Capture of the former—Both vessels taken by the Poictiers—Moral effect of the combat between the Wasp and Frolic.

It is worthy of notice, that Congress did nothing of any moment towards increasing the navy, on the ocean, during the year 1812, although war was declared in June. This neglect of this important branch of the public service, under circumstances that would seem so imperiously to call for the fostering care and active exertions of the government, must be ascribed to the doubts that still existed as to the possibility of keeping ships at sea, in face of the British navy. It had so long been customary for the world to say, France, whenever she put a ship into the water, was merely building for her great enemy, that an opinion was prevalent, America would be doing the same thing, if she wasted her resources in creating a marine; and it literally became necessary for the accomplished officers who composed the germ of the service, to demonstrate, from fact to fact, their ability to maintain the honour of the country, before that country would frankly confide to them the means. As we proceed in the narrative of events, this singular historical truth will become more apparent.

Com. Rodgers sailed on a second cruise, after re-

fitting, leaving the Hornet in port; but Com. Decatur, in the United States, 44, and the Argus, 16, Capt. Sinclair, parted company with him, at sea, on the 12th of October, after cruising some time without falling in with any thing of importance. On the 17th, he captured the British packet, Swallow, with a large amount of specie on board, and continued his cruise to the eastward. In the meanwhile, the United States and Argus separated, the former standing more to the southward and eastward, with a view to get into the track of the enemy's Indiamen. On the 25th of October, or thirteen days after she had left the squadron, the United States, then in lat. 29° N., long. 29° 30′ W., made a large sail to windward. It was Sunday, and there was a good breeze, with a heavy sea on. It was soon ascertained that the stranger was an enemy, and every exertion was made to get alongside of him, though the English ship, having the advantage of the wind, which she tenaciously maintained, was enabled, for some time, to prevent it.

At length, believing himself to be within reach of his guns, Com. Decatur ordered a broadside to be fired from the United States, but it was found that most of the shot fell short. Keeping her luff, however, the ship was enabled to get nearer, and after a short delay, she opened again with effect. A heavy and steady cannonade now commenced from the long guns of both vessels, carronades being useless for the first half hour.

It was soon apparent, that the American ship was cutting her antagonist to pieces, while she sustained but very little injury herself. As a matter of course the English ship fell to leeward, while the American both closed and fore-reached on her. Finding herself far enough ahead and to windward, the United States

at length tacked and ranged up under the enemy's lee. At this moment the mizen-mast of the latter had been shot away, his main and fore-top-masts were gone, his main yard was hanging in two pieces, and no colours were flying.

As the United States came up under the lee of the English ship, the firing having ceased on both sides, she hailed, and demanded the name of her antagonist, and whether she had submitted. To the first interrogatory, Com. Decatur was answered that the ship was the Macedonian, 38, Capt. Carden, and to the second, that the vessel had struck. On taking possession, the enemy was found fearfully cut to pieces, having received no less than 100 round shot in her hull alone. Of 300 men on board her, 36 were killed, and 68 wounded.

The Macedonian was a very fine ship of her class, mounting, as usual, 49 guns, eighteens on her gun-deck, and 32 pound carronades above. She was smaller, of lighter armament, and had fewer men than her opponent, of course; but the disproportion between the force of the two vessels, was much less than that between the execution. In this action, the advantage of position was with the British ship until she was crippled, and the combat was little more than a plain cannonade at a distance that rendered grape and musketry of little or no use, for the greater part of the time. The fire of the United States took effect so heavily in the waist of her antagonist, that it is said the marines of the latter were removed to the batteries, which circumstance increased the efficiency of the ship, by enabling new crews to be placed at guns that had been once cleared of their men. On the other hand, the marines of the United States remained drawn up in the waist of that ship, most of

the time quite useless, though they are understood to have shown the utmost steadiness and good conduct under the example of their commander, the weight of the enemy's fire passing a short distance above their heads.

The United States suffered surprisingly little, considering the length of the cannonade, and her equal exposure. She lost one of her top-gallant-masts, received some wounds in the spars, had a good deal of rigging cut, and was otherwise injured aloft, but was hulled but a few times. Of her officers and people five were killed and seven wounded. Of the latter, two died, one of whom was Mr. John Musser Funk, the junior lieutenant of the ship. No other officer was hurt.

On taking possession of his prize, Com. Decatur found her in a state that admitted of getting her into port. Her two principal masts were secured, and a jury mizen-mast was rigged by Mr. Allen, the first lieutenant of the United States, who was put in charge of her, with great ingenuity, so as to convert the vessel into a bark.

When the necessary repairs were complete, the two ships made the best of their way to America; Com. Decatur discontinuing his cruise, in order to convoy his prize into port. The United States arrived off New London on the 4th of December, and about the same time the Macedonian got into Newport. Shortly after, both ships reached New York by the Hell Gate passage.

The order and style with which the Macedonian was taken, added materially to the high reputation that Com. Decatur already enjoyed. His services were acknowledged in the usual manner, and he was soon

after directed to cruise in the United States with the Macedonian, Capt. Jones, in company. Mr. Allen, the first lieutenant of the United States, was promoted to the rank of a master-commandant, and he received due credit for the steady discipline that the ship's company had displayed.

The Argus, under Capt. Sinclair, after separating from the United States, had cruised alone, making several captures of merchantmen, though she met no vessel of war, of a force proper for her to engage. During this cruise, the brig was chased for three days and nights, the latter being moonlight, by a squadron of the enemy, two of which were ships of the line. On this occasion, the Argus proved her fine qualities, and the coolness of her officers and people did them infinite credit. All the guns were preserved, though the brig was so hard pressed as to be obliged to start her water, to cut away anchors, and to throw overboard some of her boats. Notwithstanding the perseverance of her pursuers, the Argus actually took and manned a prize during the chase, though two of the enemy got near enough to open their fire as the vessels separated. The brig escaped, having made five prizes before she got in.

While these events were in the course of accomplishment, among the other vessels, the Wasp, 18, Capt. Jones, left the Delaware on a cruise. She was one of the sloops built at the close of the Tripolitan war, and like her sister ship, the Hornet, a beautiful and fast cruiser. The latter, however, which originally was a brig, had been rebuilt, or extensively repaired at Washington, on which occasion, she had been pierced for twenty guns, and rigged into a ship. The Wasp still retained her old armament and construction,

having been a ship from the first, mounting 16 thirty-two pound carronades and 2 long twelves. Her complement of men varied from 130 to 160, according to circumstances. She had been to Europe with despatches before the declaration of war, and did not return home until some weeks after hostilities had commenced.

The Wasp, after refitting, sailed on the 13th of October, and ran off east, southerly, to clear the coast, and to get into the track of vessels steering north. Three days out it came on to blow very heavily, when the ship lost her jib-boom, and two men that were on it at the moment. The next day the weather moderated, and about eleven o'clock in the night of the 17th, being then in latitude 37° N., and longitude 65° W., several sail were made. Two of these vessels appeared to be large, and Capt. Jones did not deem it prudent to close, until he had a better opportunity of observing them, but hauling off to a convenient distance, he steered in the same direction with the unknown vessels, with the intention of ascertaining their characters in the morning. When the day dawned, the strangers were seen a-head, and to leeward. Making sail to close, they were soon ascertained to be a small convoy of six English ships, under the charge of a heavy brig of war. Four of the merchantmen were armed, mounting, as well as could be seen at that distance, from 12 to 18 guns. The commander of the brig, however, manifested no wish to avail himself of the assistance of any of his convoy, but shortening sail, the latter passed a-head, while he prepared to give battle.

The Wasp now sent down top-gallant-yards, close reefed her top-sails, and was otherwise brought under short fighting canvass, there being a good deal of sea

on. The stranger was under little sail also, and his main-yard was on deck, where it had been lowered to undergo repairs. As it was the evident intention of the Englishman to cover his convoy, very little manœuvring was necessary to bring the vessels alongside of each other. At thirty-two minutes past eleven a. m., the Wasp ranged close up on the starboard side of the enemy, receiving her broadside, at the distance of about sixty yards, and delivering her own. The fire of the Englishman immediately became very rapid, it having been thought at the time, that he discharged three guns to the Wasp's two, and as the main-top-mast of the latter ship was shot away within five minutes after the action commenced, appearances, at first, were greatly in the enemy's favour. In eight minutes, the gaff and mizen top-gallant-mast also fell. But, if the fire of the Wasp was the most deliberate, it was much the most deadly.

In consequence of the fall of the main-top-mast of the American ship, which, with the main-top-sail-yard, lodged on the fore and fore-top-sail braces, it became next to impossible to haul any of the yards, had circumstances required it; but the battle was continued with great spirit on both sides, until the ships had gradually closed so near, that the bends of the Wasp rubbed against her antagonist's bows. Here the ships came foul, the bowsprit of the enemy passing in over the quarter-deck of the Wasp, forcing her bows up into the wind, and enabling the latter to throw in a close raking fire.

When Capt. Jones perceived the effect of the enemy's fire on his spars and rigging, it was his intention to board, and he had closed with this view; but finding his ship in so favourable a position to rake the enemy,

he countermanded an order to that effect, and directed a fresh broadside to be delivered. The vessels were now so near, that in loading some of the Wasp's guns, the rammers hit against the bows of her antagonist, and the people of the English ship could no longer be kept at their quarters forward. The discharge of one or two of the carronades swept the enemy's decks, when the impetuosity of the Wasp's crew could no longer be restrained, and they began to leap into the rigging, and from thence on the bowsprit of the brig. As soon as Mr. Biddle, the first lieutenant of the Wasp, found that the people were not to be restrained, he sprang into the rigging, followed by a party of officers and men, and the attempt to board was seriously made. On the forecastle of the brig, Mr. Biddle passed all his own people, but there was no enemy to oppose him. Two or three officers were standing aft, most of them bleeding. The decks were strewed with killed and wounded, but not a common hand was at his station, all of those that were able having gone below, with the exception of the man at the wheel. The latter had maintained his post, with the spirit of a true seaman, to the very last.

The English officers threw down their swords, in token of submission, as Mr. Biddle passed aft; and it ought to be added, to the credit of the conquerors, notwithstanding the excitement such scenes are too apt to lead even the disciplined into excesses, not an enemy was injured by the boarders. Mr. Biddle sprang into the main rigging, and lowered the English flag with his own hands, when the combat ceased, after a duration of 43 minutes.

The prize turned out to be the British sloop-of-war Frolic, 18, Capt. Whinyates, homeward bound, with

the vessels in the Honduras trade under convoy. The Frolic, with the exception of being a brig, was a vessel of the size and construction of the Wasp. She mounted on her main-deck, 16 thirty-two pound carronades, four long guns, differently stated to have been sixes, nines, and twelves, and with two twelve-pound carronades on a top-gallant-forecastle. This armament would make a force greater than that of the Wasp by four guns, a disparity that is not immaterial in vessels so small. The two crews were pretty equal in numbers, though it is probable that the Wasp may have had a few men the most, a difference that was of little moment under the circumstances, more particularly as the Frolic was a brig, and the battle was fought, by both vessels, under very short sail.

The Wasp was cut up aloft to an unusual degree, there having been no question that her antagonist's fire was heavy, and spirited. The braces and standing rigging were nearly all shot away, and some of the spars that stood were injured. She had 5 men killed, and 5 wounded. The hull sustained no great damage.

The Frolic was also much injured in her spars and rigging, more particularly the former; and the two vessels were hardly separated, before both her masts fell. She had been hulled at almost every discharge, and was virtually a wreck when taken possession of by the Americans. Her loss in men was never accurately known; but her captain, first lieutenant, and master, were wounded; the two latter mortally. Mr. Biddle, who remained in charge of the prize, after so gallantly boarding her, stated, that as far as he could ascertain, she had from 70 to 80 killed and wounded. Subsequent information, however, has given reason to

believe that the number was even greater. Capt. Whinyates, in his official report, states that not 20 of his crew escaped unhurt, which would probably raise the casualties to a number between 90 and 100.

The Frolic had scarcely submitted, when a large sail was seen standing towards the two vessels, evidently a ship of force. Instructions were given to Mr. Biddle to make the best of his way to Charleston with the prize, and the Wasp began to make sail, with an intention to continue her cruise; but on opening her canvass, and turning the reefs out of her top-sails, they were found to be nearly in ribands. The stranger, which turned out to be the enemy's ship Poictiers, 74, hove a shot over the Frolic, in passing, and soon ranging up near the Wasp, both vessels were captured. The Poictiers proceeded with her two prizes to Bermuda, and, the Americans being exchanged, soon after returned home.

As this was the first combat of the war between vessels of a force so nearly equal, as to render cavilling difficult, the result occasioned much exultation in America, and greatly increased the confidence of the public, in supposing an American ship had quite as much claims to conduct, courage, and skill, as their enemies. Persons of reflection attached but little importance, it is true, to the mere fact that a few cruisers of the enemy had been taken in single combat, but the idea of British invincibility on the ocean was destroyed, and the vast moral results were distinctly foreseen. Men part with their prejudices slowly, and with reluctance; and the warfare on the ocean produced one on the land, in which the contending parties, by pretending to analyze the three combats

that had now occurred, displayed on both sides more ignorance than logic, and much intemperance of language and prevarication.

They who understood the power of ships, and examined details, with a real desire to learn the truth, discovered enough to see that a new era had occurred in naval warfare. While these critics perceived and admitted the superiority of the American frigates, in the two actions that had occurred, they could not but see that it was disproportioned to the execution they had done; and in the combat between the two little vessels that has just been recorded, the important fact was not overlooked, that the enemy's brig had suffered as severe a loss in men, as it was usual for the heaviest vessels to sustain in general actions. Hitherto, English ships had been compelled to seek close contests with their foes, but now they had only to back their top-sails, to be certain of being engaged at the muzzles of their guns. There was no falling off in British spirit; no vessel was unworthily given up; for the case of the Alert may be taken as a surprise; and it was necessary to search for the cause of this sudden and great change, in the character of the new adversary. The most cavilling detractors of the rising reputation of the American marine, were reluctantly obliged to admit that naval combats were no longer what they had been; and the discreet among the enemy, saw the necessity of greater caution, more laboured preparations, and of renewed efforts.

As respects the particular combat between the Wasp and Frolic, in the published accounts of the English captain, much stress was laid on the crippled condition

of his ship, when she went into action. It is admitted that the Frolic had her main-yard on deck when she engaged, and, as little canvass was required, her after-sail was reduced to her fore-and-aft main-sail.

There are circumstances in which the loss of a brig's main-topsail would be of the last importance; and there are circumstances, again, in which it would be of but little moment. On this occasion, it does not appear to have materially influenced the result; and the very fact that the yard was down, may have prevented the mast from falling during the engagement, instead of falling after it. On details of this nature, it is difficult to reason accurately, so much depending on minute circumstances, that must escape the general observer. In effect, the loss of the main-yard converted the Frolic into a half-rigged brig, a species of vessel that is in much request among seamen, and which would require fewer men to manage, than a full rigged brig*.

Capt. Jones was promoted shortly after this success, and he was appointed to the command of the Macedonian, 38, which ship had been purchased and taken into the service. The name of Mr. Biddle, who was an old lieutenant, and whose spirited conduct in the action was much appreciated, was also included in the

* The English commander, in his account of the action, however, states that he had suffered in a severe gale on the night preceding the engagement, losing his topsails, carrying away his main-yard, and springing his main-topmast. On the night preceding the action the Wasp is known to have been watching the convoy, quite near by, and nothing is said of any gale, though one had occurred the day previously. These are some of the discrepancies with which the historian has to contend, but it is not improbable that many of them ought to be ascribed to the public offices, rather than to the mistakes of eye-witnesses.

list of masters and commanders that was sent into the senate about the same time*.

* An erroneous opinion has been prevalent, that Mr. Biddle was merely a volunteer in the Wasp, in her action with the Frolic. The fact would not affect the estimate of his conduct, but he was regularly ordered to the sloop as her first lieutenant, and acted in that capacity, and in that capacity only, during the engagement.

CHAPTER XII.

Cruise of the Constitution and Hornet—The Bonne Citoyenne challenged by the Hornet—Capture of the Java by the Constitution—Capture of the Peacock by the Hornet—Law to increase the Naval force of America.

WHEN Com. Bainbridge took command of the three vessels that have been already mentioned, the Constitution, 44, his flag ship, and Hornet, 18, Capt. Lawrence, were lying in the port of Boston; and the Essex, 32, Capt. Porter, had just gone into the Delaware. Orders were sent to the latter officer, to rendezvous first at Port Praya, in the island of St. Jago; and secondly, at Fernando Noronha. Other places of resort were pointed out; and he was also instructed to cruise in the track of the enemy's Indiamen, until a time mentioned, when, if he failed to fall in with his senior officer, he was at liberty to follow his own discretion. As the Essex never did join the other ships, we shall defer the mention of her active and highly interesting cruise, to another chapter.

The Constitution and Hornet sailed from Boston on the 26th of October. Touching at the different rendezvous, where they appeared in the characters of British vessels of war, letters were left for Capt. Porter, under the assumed name of Sir James Yeo, of the Southampton 32*, according to arrangement, and the ships proceeded.

* When the Essex arrived, Capt. Porter obtained one of these letters, which, in addition to some common-place matter, contained orders

Com. Bainbridge arrived off St. Salvador, on the 13th of December and the Hornet was sent in to communicate with the consul. Capt. Lawrence found the British sloop of war, Bonne Citoyenne, 18, Capt. Green, in port, but about to sail for England, with a very large amount of specie on board. The presence of this vessel suggested a hope of being able to get her out. After conversing with the consul, that gentleman was empowered to inform the commander of the English ship, that Capt. Lawrence was desirous of meeting him at sea, and to give the necessary pledges that the Constitution would be out of the way. A correspondence took place between the English and American consuls on the subject, and in the end, Capt. Green declined acceding to the proposal.

There may be occasions in which an officer is justified in giving an invitation of this kind to an enemy's ship, since a challenge may have all the practical effects of a ruse de guerre, by getting a vessel under his guns, in this manner, that he might not be able to get there in any other way. Had the Hornet taken the Bonne Citoyenne, by the aid of this provocation, she would have conferred a great benefit on her country, and inflicted a great injury on the enemy, both of which were the legitimate objects of her cruise; but challenges of this sort are generally to be avoided, since they may be the means of compelling an officer to engage at a

in sympathetic ink, for his future movements. Capt. Porter relates the occurrence, and gives a copy of the letter, in his journal of the Essex's cruise, the nature of the whole transaction appearing on its face. The letter speaks for itself, yet Capt. Porter, in a leading English publication, was charged with being guilty of an improper act, for opening a letter directed to another person! When national hostility blinds a writer to such a degree as this, he puts himself without the pale of common sense, if not without that of common honesty.

moment when it would be his duty to avoid an action. The commander of a vessel of war is bound, at all times, to retain as perfect a control of his movements as possible, that he may be in a situation to consult the public good, as events arise; and the officer who is pledged to meet his enemy under prescribed rules, is no longer the master of his own movements, should general duty suddenly interfere with his particular convention. There can be no question that, under his peculiar circumstances, Capt. Green decided properly, in refusing to meet the Hornet, though the reason that was given was objectionable, inasmuch as he appeared to distrust an interference on the part of the American frigate.

The Constitution left the Hornet to blockade the Bonne Citoyenne alone, on the 26th, and stood to the southward, keeping the land aboard. About nine a. m., of the 29th, when in lat. 13° 6' S., and long. 31° W., or at a distance of ten leagues from the coast, two strange sail were made, in-shore and to windward. One of these vessels continued to stand in, while the other, which was much the largest, altered her course in the direction of the American frigate, which had tacked to close with her. The day was pleasant, there was but little sea, and the wind was light at E.N.E.

At eleven a. m., being satisfied that the strange sail was an enemy's frigate, the Constitution tacked again to the southward and eastward, to draw her off the land, which was plainly in sight. At the same time she set her royals, and boarded main-tack, in order to effect this object.

At twelve m., the Constitution showed her colours, and shortly after the stranger set the English ensign. Signals were made by both ships, but proved to be

mutually unintelligible. At twenty minutes past 1, p.m., believing himself far enough from the land, Com. Bainbridge took in his main-sail and royals, and tacked towards the enemy. Soon after, both ships had their heads to the southward and eastward, the Englishman being to windward more than a mile distant, and well on the Constitution's quarter.

The enemy had now hauled down his ensign, though he kept a jack flying, and Com. Bainbridge ordered a shot to be fired a-head of him, to induce him to show his colours anew. This order brought on a general fire, and the battle commenced at two p. m., on both sides, with a furious cannonade. As the enemy sailed the best, in the light wind that prevailed, he soon forged a-head, and kept away with a view to cross the Constitution's bow, but was foiled by the latter ship's wearing, which brought the heads of the two combatants once more to the westward. In performing these evolutions, as the enemy steered free, and the Constitution luffed, the vessels got within pistol shot, when the first repeated the same attempt, the ships wearing together, bringing their heads once more to the eastward. The English ship forereaching again, now endeavoured to tack to preserve the weather gauge, but failing, she was obliged to wear, a manœuvre that the Constitution had executed before her, to avoid being raked, for the wheel of the latter ship had been shot away, and it was difficult to watch the vessel with the helm, as closely as was desirable. The Constitution, notwithstanding, was the first in coming to the wind on the other tack, and she got an efficient raking fire at her opponent.

Both vessels now ran off free, with the wind on the quarter, the English ship still to windward, when the latter, being greatly injured, made an attempt to close,

at 55 minutes past two, by running down on the Constitution's quarter. Her jib-boom ran into the Constitution's mizen-rigging, in which situation she suffered severely, without being able to effect her purpose. The head of her bowsprit was soon shot away, and in a few minutes after, her foremast came by the board. The Constitution shot ahead, keeping away to avoid being raked; and in separating, the stump of the enemy's bowsprit passed over the American frigate's taffrail.

The two ships now brought the wind abeam again, with their heads to the eastward, and the Constitution having fore-reached, in consequence of carrying the most sail, wore, passed her antagonist, luffed up under his quarter, wore again, and the Englishman having kept away, the vessels came alongside of each other, broadside and broadside, and engaged for a short time, yard-arm and yard-arm. In a few minutes the enemy lost his mizen-mast, leaving nothing standing but his main-mast, with the yard shot away near the slings. As his fire had ceased, the Constitution hauled aboard her tacks, and luffed athwart her antagonist's bow; passing out of the combat to windward, at five minutes past four, with her topsails, courses, spanker, and jib set. In executing this manœuvre, Com. Bainbridge was under the impression that the enemy had struck, the ensign which had been hoisted in his main-rigging being down, his ship a wreck, and his fire silenced.

The Constitution having got a favourable weatherly position, passed an hour in repairing damages, and in securing her masts; it being all-important to an American frigate so far from home, without colonies or military stations to repair to, and an ocean to traverse that was covered with enemies, to look vigilantly to

these great auxiliaries. In about an hour, observing an ensign still flying on board his enemy, Com. Bainbridge wore round, and standing directly across his fore-foot, the English vessel anticipated his fire by striking.

The Constitution immediately wore, with her head on the same tack as the captured vessel, hoisted out a boat, and sent Mr. Parker, the first lieutenant, to take possession. The prize proved to be the British frigate, Java, 38, Capt. Lambert, bound to the East Indies, having on board as passengers, Lieut. Gen. Hislop and staff, together with several supernumerary sea officers, and a considerable number of men, intended for other ships. This combat lasted near two hours, from the commencement to the end of the firing, and it was warmly contested on both sides, but with very different results. Although there was more manœuvring than common, the Java had been literally picked to pieces by shot, spar following spar, until she had not one left. Her fore-mast was first cut away near the cat-harpings, and afterwards, by a double-headed shot, about five-and-twenty feet from the deck. The main-top-mast went early, and the main-mast fell after the Constitution hauled off. The mizen-mast was shot out of the ship, a few feet from the deck, and the bowsprit near the cap. Her hull was also greatly injured; and her loss in men, according to the British published accounts, was 22 killed and 102 wounded; though there is good reason for supposing it was considerably greater. Com. Bainbridge stated it at 60 killed and 101 wounded. There may have been some discrepancy in these statements, in consequence of the great number of supernumeraries on board the Java, which ship is said to have had more than 400 men in

her when taken, or near 100 more than her regular complement*. Capt. Lambert, of the Java, was mortally wounded; and one of her lieutenants, the master, and many of her inferior officers, were slain, or seriously hurt.

The Constitution did not lose a spar! She went into action with her royal yards across, and came out of it with all three of them in their places. An eighteen-pound shot passed through her mizen-mast; the fore-mast was slightly wounded, and the main-mast was untouched. The main-top-mast was also slightly wounded; a few other spars were hit, without being carried away; the running rigging was a good deal cut; several shrouds were parted, and the ship received a few round shot in her hull. Of her crew, 9 were killed, and 25 were wounded. Among the latter were Com. Bainbridge, and the junior lieutenant, Mr. Alwyn. The last died of his injuries, some time after the action. Com. Bainbridge was slightly hurt in the hip, early in the engagement, by a musket-ball; and the shot that carried away the wheel, drove a small copper bolt into his thigh, inflicting a dangerous wound, though he kept the deck until midnight†.

* The British accounts state the crew of the Java at 377 men, including supernumeraries. Com. Bainbridge reports that he furloughed 361 officers, seamen, marines, and boys, exclusive of 8 passengers and 9 Portuguese seamen, making 378 souls. If to these be added the 22 allowed to be killed by the enemy, a total of just 400 is obtained. But it is said that a muster-list, made five days after the Java sailed, contained just 446 names.

† Some touching anecdotes are related of the incidents of this combat. Two Marblehead seamen, brothers, of the name of Cheever, were on board the Constitution, one was killed, and the other mortally wounded. It is said that they were twins, midshipmen, in the Java, and that both were killed. An anecdote of a different sort also took place. An American was a prisoner in the Java, and he was sent on the berth deck at the commencement of the action.

Although the injuries to the hull of the Java were not of a nature to render her being carried into port difficult, the smoothness of the sea having prevented her from receiving many shot below the water-line, there existed many objections to attempting it. In the first place, it was known that the Brazilian government was favourable to that of Great Britain, and there had been strong proof of it during the recent visit of Com. Bainbridge to St. Salvador. That officer, therefore, felt a hesitation about trusting his prize in a Brazilian port. The difficulty of obtaining masts of the necessary size, the distance from home, and the risks of recapture, on nearing the coast, united to render it expedient to destroy her. After lying by her two or three days, therefore, with a view to remove the wounded with proper care, the Java was blown up, and the Constitution made the best of her way to St. Salvador, where she immediately landed her prisoners on parole.

Throughout the whole of the transactions connected with the interests and feelings of the officers and men he had captured, Com. Bainbridge manifested a liberality and delicacy, that tended to relieve the miseries that war necessarily inflicts, and which appear to have left a deep impression on the enemy.

The same general peculiarities attended this combat, as had distinguished the two other cases of frigate

This gentleman was naturally anxious to ascertain how the battle was going, but had no other means than by inquiring of a Chinese, or a Lascar, who was stationed near one of the hatchways, where he could command a view of the gun-deck. To all his inquiries, however, he got no other answer than, "Oh, a glorious victory!" Surprised at hearing this reply so often, when he saw scores of wounded brought below, and heard shot constantly striking the ship, the American at length demanded, "Yes, but *which* side will *gain* the victory?" The mercenary now regarded him with cool indifference, and answered, "Why, one, or t'other."

actions. In all three, the American vessels were superior to their antagonists; but in all three, had the difference in execution been greatly disproportioned to the disparity in force. The Java, like the Guerriere, had been well handled, but her fire had been badly aimed; and it began to be no longer believed that the broadside of an English ship was as formidable as it had been represented. It would seem that the Constitution actually wore six times, after the action had fairly commenced; and allowing for the positions of the ships, the lightness of the wind, and the space that it was necessary to run, in order to avoid being raked while executing these evolutions, it is probable that the cannonade did not actually occupy an hour. The action must have terminated some miles to leeward of the spot where it commenced *.

On reaching St. Salvador, Com. Bainbridge found the Hornet off the port, and it was understood that the Bonne Citoyenne had hove-short, with an intention of

* The discussions in the public prints, which naturally followed the different combats, in nations speaking the same language, brought forth some minute statements at the time, that seem to have been better founded than common. By one of these statements, which was evidently made by an officer of the Constitution, that ship mounted, in the action with the Java, 54 guns, and threw 677 lbs. 5 oz. of metal at a broadside; the apparent deficiency between the metal and the known calibre of the guns, arising from short weight in the shot. On the other hand, the Java is said to have mounted 49 guns, and to have thrown 605 lbs. of metal at a broadside. It is affirmed in this account, that the Java's eighteens threw a shot that weighed 19 lbs. If French eighteens, the shot ought to have weighed near 19½ lbs., and the Java had certainly been a French ship. Whether she retained her old armament or not, is not known. That the American shot, during all this war, were generally light, would seem to be certain. There may not have been perfect accuracy in the statement alluded to, but it is probable that the actual difference between the broadsides of the two ships, was much less than the apparent.

going to sea that night. The arrival of the Constitution appears to have produced a change in this plan, if it ever existed. Remaining a few days in port to land his prisoners, and to complete his arrangements, Com. Bainbridge sailed for America, January 6, 1813, and arrived at Boston on the 27th of February, after an absence of four months.

The Hornet was left with orders that were substantially discretionary. She remained off St. Salvador, blockading the Bonne Citoyenne, alone, for eighteen days, when she was chased into the Harbour by the Montagu, 74, which vessel had come to relieve the enemy's sloop of war from the awkward necessity of fighting with so much treasure on board, or of the still more unpleasant dilemma of appearing indisposed to meet a ship of equal force *. It was late in the evening when the Montagu approached, and the Hornet availed herself of the darkness, to wear and stand out again, passing into the offing without further molestation.

Capt. Lawrence now hauled by the wind, to the northward and eastward, with the intention of going off Pernambuco. He made a few prizes, and continued cruising up the coast, until the 24th of February,

* The commander of the Bonne Citoyenne was much sneered at, in the publications of the day, for not going out to meet the Hornet. The censures, like the commendations, of ignorance and passion, are of no great importance, and he is entitled to the highest praise who can perform his duty without regarding either. It would be very difficult to show that a ship sent to convey treasure, ought to seek a conflict with a vessel of even inferior force; and there may be many reasons that, if known, might reflect credit on a commander for refusing a challenge, which could have no connexion with even this particular fact. Opinions on such subjects ought always to be expressed with caution; and there can be no stronger evidence of the high level of the public mind, than is shown in an indisposition to listen to detraction of this character.

when the ship was near the mouth of Demerara river. Here he gave chase to a brig, which drew him into quarter less five, when, having no pilot, he deemed it prudent to haul off shore. At this moment he supposed himself to be about two and a half leagues from the fort at the entrance of the river. Just without the bar, another brig was seen. As she had an English ensign set, and bore every appearance of being a man-of-war, it was determined to attack her. While the Hornet was beating round the Carobana bank, which lay between her and the enemy, with a view to get at the latter, another sail was made on her weather quarter, edging down towards her. It was now half-past three p.m., and the Hornet continuing to turn to windward, with her original intention, by twenty minutes past four the second stranger was made out to be a large man-of-war brig, and soon after he showed English colours.

As soon as her captain was satisfied that the vessel approaching was an enemy, the Hornet was cleared for action, and her people went to quarters. The ship was kept close by the wind, in order to gain the weather gauge, the enemy still running free. At five ten, feeling certain that he could weather the Englishman, Capt. Lawrence showed his colours and tacked. The two vessels were now standing towards each other, with their heads different ways, both close by the wind. They passed within half pistol-shot at 5 25, delivering their broadsides as the guns bore; each vessel using the larboard battery. As soon as they were clear, the Englishman put his helm hard up, with the intention to wear short round, and get a raking fire at the Hornet; but the manœuvre was closely watched and promptly imitated, and, firing his starboard guns, he

was obliged to right his helm, as the Hornet was coming down on his quarter, in a perfect blaze of fire. The latter closed, and maintaining the admirable position she had got, poured in her shot with such vigour, that a little before 5' 40, the enemy not only lowered his ensign, but he hoisted it union down, in the fore-rigging, as a signal of distress. His main-mast soon after fell.

Mr. J. T. Shubrick was sent on board to take possession. This officer soon returned with the information that the prize was the enemy's sloop of war, Peacock, 18, Capt. Peake, and that she was fast sinking, having already six feet of water in her hold. Mr. Conner, the third lieutenant of the Hornet, and Mr. B. Cooper, one of her midshipmen, were immediately despatched with boats, to get out the wounded, and to endeavour to save the vessel. It was too late for the latter, though every exertion was made. Both vessels were immediately anchored, guns were thrown overboard, shot-holes plugged, and recourse was had to the pumps, and even to bailing, but the short twilight of that low latitude soon left the prize crew, and all the prisoners were not yet removed. In the hurry and confusion of such a scene, and while the boats of the Hornet were absent, four of the prisoners lowered the stern boat of the Peacock, which had been thought too much injured to be used, jumped into it, and pulled for the land, at the imminent risk of their lives*.

At length, Mr. Conner became sensible that the brig was in momentary danger of sinking, and he endeavoured to muster the people remaining on board, in the Peacock's launch, which still stood on deck, the

* These adventurers got ashore safely.

fall of the main-mast, and the want of time, having prevented an attempt to get it into water. Unfortunately, all hope of keeping the brig afloat being gone, a good many of the Peacock's people were below, rummaging the vessel, and when the brig gave her last wallow it was too late to save them.

The Peacock settled very easily but suddenly, in 5½ fathoms water, and the two American officers, with most of the men and several prisoners saved themselves in the launch, though not without great exertions. Three of the Hornet's people went down in the brig, and nine of the Peacock's were also drowned. Four more of the latter saved theinselves by running up the rigging into the fore-top, which remained out of water, after the hull had got to the bottom. The launch had no oars, and it was paddled by pieces of boards towards the Hornet, when it was met by one of the cutters of that ship, which was returning to the brig. This cutter immediately pulled towards the Peacock's fore-mast, in the hope of finding some one swimming, but, with the exception of those in the top, no person was saved.

In this short encounter, the Peacock had her captain and four men killed, and thirty-three wounded. The Hornet had one man killed, and two wounded, in addition to two men badly burned by the explosion of a cartridge. She suffered a good deal aloft, had one shot through the fore-mast, and the bowsprit was hit.

The Peacock was a vessel of the Hornet's size, being a little shorter but having more beam. Her proper armament was thirty-twos, but, for some reason that is not known, they had been changed for lighter guns, and in the action she mounted sixteen twenty-four pound carronades, two light long guns, a twelve

pound carronade on her top-gallant forecastle, and another light long gun aft. By her quarter bill she had a hundred and thirty men on board, at the time she was taken. This force rendered her inferior to the Hornet, which ship mounted eighteen thirty-two pound carronades and two long twelves. The Hornet in the action mustered a hundred and thirty-five men, fit for duty.

Notwithstanding the superiority of the Hornet, the same disparity between the execution and the difference in force, is to be seen in this action, as in those already mentioned. In allowing the Hornet to get the weather gauge, the Peacock was out-manœuvred, but, with this exception, she is understood to have been well managed, though her gunnery was so defective. The only shot that touched the hull of the Hornet, was one fired as the latter ship was falling off, in wearing, and it merely glanced athwart her bows, indenting a plank beneath the cat-head. As this must have been fired from the starboard guns of the Peacock, the fact demonstrates how well she was handled, and that, in wearing, her commander had rightly estimated and judiciously used the peculiar powers of a brig, though the quick movements of his antagonist deprived him of the results he had expected, and immediately gave the Hornet a decided advantage in position. It would be cavilling, to deny that this short combat was decided by the superior gunnery and rapid handling of the Hornet*.

* It is said that the first shot fired by the Peacock cut away the Hornet's pennant. This could only happen, from having struck the water at a most unfortunate angle. The man killed in the American ship, was in the mizen top. Indeed, in most of the combats of this war much seamanship and great gallantry were discovered by the enemy, but he appeared singularly deficient in the knowledge of the

As it was not known that the brig at anchor might not come out and attack her, the greatest exertions were made on board the Hornet, to be in readiness to receive the enemy, and by nine o'clock at night, new sails had been bent, her boats were stowed, the ship was cleared, and every thing was ready for another action. At two a. m., she got under way, and stood to the northward and westward, under easy sail. Captain Lawrence finding that he had now two hundred and seventy-seven souls on board, including the people of another prize, and that he was short of water, determined to return home. The allowance of water was reduced to three pints a man, and the ship ran through the West Indies, anchoring at Holme's Hole, in Martha's Vineyard, on the 19th of March; whence she came through the Vineyard and Long Island Sounds to New York, without meeting an enemy.

The successes of the Constitution and Hornet, two of the vessels of Com. Bainbridge's squadron, served greatly to increase the popularity of the navy. Their commanders were rewarded with medals, swords, and votes of thanks, by different legislatures, and Captain Lawrence was promoted, and transferred to the command of the Chesapeake.

Congress by this time began to feel more confidence in the ability to withstand British prowess, and a law had been passed on the 2nd of January, to increase the naval force of the country. By the provisions of

means of turning these advantages to account. A great proportion of the men killed and wounded, were aloft when they were hit. Had the guns of the Peacock been of the largest size, they could not have materially changed the result of this conflict, as the weight of shot that do not hit, is of no great moment.

this act, the President was empowered to build four ships to rate not less than seventy-four guns, and six ships to rate at forty-four guns each. This was at once multiplying the force of the navy tenfold, and it may be esteemed the first step that was ever actually put in execution, towards establishing a marine that might prove of moment, in influencing the material results of a war. Measures were taken immediately to lay the keels of some of the ships of the line, and Com. Bainbridge, being appointed to superintend the construction of one of them, relinquished the command of the Constitution.

Another law passed, on the 3rd of March, directing six sloops of war to be built on the ocean, and authorising the construction of as many vessels on the lakes, as the public service might require. Congress also voted handsome sums to the officers and crews of the ships that had destroyed or captured vessels of war, in the way of prize money.

The history of the remaining ship of Com. Bainbridge's squadron, shall be next given, with a view not to interrupt the connexion of this branch of the subject.

CHAPTER XIII.

Cruise of Captain Porter in the Essex—Prizes taken by that ship.

The Essex, 32, has frequently been mentioned in the course of this history. This ship was properly rated, her gun-deck armament having originally consisted of 26 long twelves; but it had been changed previously to the war, and, with the exception of a few chase guns of this calibre, she mounted 32 pound carronades in their places. Her first cruise was under Preble, when she carried the pennant of an American man-of-war, for the first time, to the eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, and she was now destined to again open the way for the navy into a new sea.

When Com. Bainbridge sailed from Boston, the Essex, still under the command of Capt. Porter, was lying in the Delaware, and she quitted that river the 28th of October, or two days after the other ships of the squadron had got to sea. In anticipation of a long cruise, Captain Porter carried out with him a crew larger than common, and a greater number of officers than properly belonged to a vessel of that class; the entire muster roll containing 319 names, among which were three commissioned and two acting lieutenants, and twelve midshipmen. In consequence of the unusual amount of supplies that was taken in, the ship was too

deep, and she did not reach the first rendezvous named in the orders of Com. Bainbridge, until some time after the Constitution and Hornet had left it.

The Essex was singularly unfortunate, in not falling in with an enemy of any sort in making this long run, and on the 11th of December she crossed the equator in longitude 30° W., the same bad luck attending her. On the 12th, however, about two p. m., a vessel was seen to windward, which had every appearance of an enemy's man-of-war brig, when sail was made in chase. At six, the stranger began to show signals, which went to confirm the idea of his character. As the chase was still to windward, and night was coming on fast, an effort was made to decoy her down, by showing signals in return, but unsuccessfully. At sunset the brig showed English colours, and when it was sufficiently dark, she made some night signals. By nine, p. m., the Essex succeeded in getting within musket shot. Capt. Porter soon after hailed, and ordered the brig to settle her top-sails, haul up her courses, and to heave-to, to windward. At the same time orders were given to the different divisions not to fire into the stranger, as it was very desirable to get possession without doing him any injury. Instead of complying with the directions of Capt. Porter, however, the brig endeavoured to cross the stern of the Essex, by keeping away, probably with an intention to rake her, and to escape to leeward. This drew a volley of musketry from the frigate, which killed one man, when the brig struck.

The prize was the British government packet Nocton, 10, with a crew of 31 men. On board of her were found $55,000 in specie. The next day a crew of 17 men was put into the Nocton, under the orders

of Act. Lieut. Finch*, who was instructed to make the best of his way to America. This officer had got between Bermuda and the Capes of Virginia, in the execution of his duty, when he was compelled to heave-to, in a gale. Just as the weather moderated, a British frigate was made to windward. Mr. Finch tried the sailing of the brig with the enemy, on different tacks, but finally put away dead before the wind, as the only means of escape. As it was not in the power of the prize crew to make sail with sufficient rapidity to compete with a frigate's complement of men, the Nocton was soon within reach of the enemy's guns, and a few shot were fired, which did some injury to her rigging. Mr. Finch, however, held on, until the enemy had got close upon his quarter, and was about to fire a volley of musketry, when, escape being hopeless, he struck. Thus did the Essex lose her first prize, though the specie had been taken out of her, and was rendered secure by being subsequently used on account of the government.

On the 14th, the Essex, made the island of Fernando de Noronha, and communicated with the land, without going in. Here Capt. Porter obtained the letter mentioned from Com. Bainbridge, informing him that he would find the other vessels off Cape Frio. From this time, until the 25th, the ship was making her passage towards the coast, and on the afternoon of that day, she hove-to off the pitch of the Cape, where no signs were to be seen of the Constitution or Hornet. Three days afterwards, in fact, the first of these vessels captured the Java off St. Salvador. After cruising a short time at this rendezvous, the Essex was drawn a long

* Now Capt. Wm. Compton Bolton.

distance to leeward in chase; and in attempting to beat up again to her station, she was met by heavy weather, which induced Capt. Porter to change his cruising ground. On the morning of the 29th, the frigate captured an English merchant vessel, which proved to be one of a convoy of six sail, in charge of a man-of-war schooner, that had sailed from Rio only the night previously, this vessel having put back in consequence of discovering a leak. On obtaining this intelligence, Capt. Porter followed on the supposed track of the convoy, and after a long and fruitless chase, he determined to go off St. Salvador, in order to intercept it. While beating up with this intention, information was received from different Portuguese vessels, of the presence of the other ships of the squadron off the port, and renewed efforts were made to join. But strong northerly winds prevailed, and Capt. Porter, after struggling with them a week, decided to run into St. Catherine's to water.

Having been disappointed in his attempts to fall in with the commodore, at three rendezvous, and ascertaining that the Montagu, 74, had sailed from Rio to raise the blockade of the vessels at St. Salvador, Capt. Porter was now greatly at a loss which way to steer, in order to join the other ships. It was near the end of January 1813, and, in point of fact, the Constitution had left the coast on the 6th of that month, on her way home. As the Hornet followed her on the 24th, in determining to act for himself, during the remainder of the cruise, Capt. Porter came to a happy decision.

An American frigate, at that day, cruising under the circumstances of the Essex, was in a very peculiar and difficult position. The influence of Great Britain extended over the whole of the South American continent,

and nothing had been done by the American government to counteract it. In all the ports, on the east side of the continent in particular, little was to be expected from any of the local authorities; and the nation was totally without depôts, or any provision whatever, for the equipment of men-of-war, out of its own ports. Even those that existed at home, were imperfect, on a small scale, and very insufficient. It cannot be too often repeated, that, in connexion with this important branch of the public service, as in most others, the facts of the country had been permitted to precede its opinion, and its necessities to press upon its meagre and incomplete preparations. Capt. Porter now found himself far from home, in what might almost be termed an enemy's sea, and without any of those provisions for re-victualling, repairing, and obtaining military supplies, that are as indispensable in a naval as in a military campaign. In other words, he was thrown upon his own resources. In this novel situation, he determined to go still farther from home, to double Cape Horn, and, by making a dash at the English whalers in the Pacific, to live upon the enemy. The possession of the specie taken in the Nocton, and the knowledge that every whaler was well-found in naval stores and provisions, their voyages commonly extending to more than three years, rendered this project not only expedient, but practicable. It was thought that England had no force in that sea to protect her commerce, with the exception of a single ship of the line, which it was understood was about to quit it; and this bold scheme was, in truth, as much characterised by wisdom and prudence, as it was by enterprise and spirit, qualities that equally indicate the accomplished officer. The season was late for doubling the Horn, it

is true, the ship was even then deficient in provisions and naval stores; but, as Capt. Porter has since explained his situation, in his own journal, his course lay between the attempt, " capture, a blockade, and starvation."

The Essex left St. Catherine's on the 26th of January, 1813, and after a most tempestuous passage round the Horn, she fell in with the pleasant south-west breezes of the Pacific Ocean on the 5th of March, and at meridian of that day her people got a distant view of the Andes. On the 5th, she anchored at the island of Mocha. Here some hogs and horses were procured for the crew, and it is worthy of remark, that the flesh of the latter was generally preferred to that of the former.

The Essex was now fairly in the Pacific, though she had not fallen in with an enemy for two months. There was but one chart of the ocean in the ship, and that was very small and imperfect; the provisions were getting short, and the vessel was much in want of cordage. Notwithstanding these necessities, Capt. Porter felt reluctant to let his arrival be known, until he had made a few captures, hoping to supply his ship from his prizes. Anxious to obtain information of the British force, by the same means, he determined to cruise a short time before he proceeded to Valparaiso. An ill fortune, however, continued to prevail, and for many days the ship was enveloped in fogs. She continued standing along shore, to the northward; and on the 13th, while running before a stiff southerly breeze, she rounded the Point of Angels, shot into full view of the port and town of Valparaiso, and was becalmed under the guns of a battery.

As he had English colours flying, Capt. Porter came

to a conclusion not to go in, for, taking a survey of the shipping in port, and perceiving several Spaniards ready to sail, he thought it prudent to let them get to sea before the arrival of an American cruiser became known in the place. One American was seen lying at anchor; a deeply laden brig, pierced for 18 guns. This vessel had her yards and top-masts struck, and boarding nettings triced up, as if she distrusted her security, even in port. The ship's head was consequently kept to the northward, and the breeze striking her again, shortly after, she ran the town out of sight in an hour or two. On the 15th, however, the ship returned, made the Point of Angels once more, went in, and anchored.

To the astonishment of Capt. Porter, he now ascertained that Chili had declared itself independent of Spain, and his reception was as favourable as he could have desired. He also learned that the viceroy of Peru had sent out cruisers against the American shipping, and that his appearance in the Pacific was of the greatest importance to the American trade, which lay at the mercy of the English letters of marque among the whalers of the enemy, and of these Peruvian corsairs. This was cheering intelligence, after the fatigues and disappointments of a cruise of so many months!

For more than a week the Essex was employed in victualling, and during this time an American whaler came in from the islands. According to the accounts of the master of this vessel, the American whalers, which had left home during a time of peace, lay entirely at the mercy of those of the enemy, several of which had sailed as regular letters of marque, and all of which were more or less armed. Many of the American vessels, as they often kept the sea six months at a

time, were probably still ignorant of the war; and it was known that one of them, at least, had already fallen into the hands of the English. As soon as imperfectly victualled, the ship went to sea, to profit by this intelligence.

On the 25th, the Essex fell in with the American whale-ship Charles, and learned that two other vessels, the Walker, and Barclay, had been captured, a few days previously, off Coquimbo, by a Peruvian, with an English ship in company. Sail was made, in consequence, in the direction of Coquimbo, and a few hours later a stranger was seen to the northward. This vessel was soon ascertained to be a cruising ship, disguised as a whaler. She showed Spanish colours, when the Essex set an English ensign, fired a gun to leeward, and the Charles, which remained in company, hoisted the American flag beneath an English jack. The Spaniard now ran down, and, when about a mile distant, he fired a shot a-head of the Essex, which that ship answered by throwing a few shot over him, to bring him nearer. When close enough, the Spanish ship sent an armed boat to board the Essex, and it was directed to go back with an order for the cruiser to run under the frigate's lee, and to send an officer to apologise for the shot she had fired at an English man-of-war. This command was complied with, and the ship was ascertained to be the Peruvian privateer Nereyda, armed with 15 guns, and with a full crew. The lieutenant, who now came on board, informed Capt. Porter that they were cruising for Americans; that they had already taken the Walker and the Barclay; that the English letter of marque Nimrod, had driven the prize-crew from on board the Walker; that they were now cruising expressly to look for the.

Nimrod, with the intention of obtaining redress; and that they had mistaken the Essex for the latter ship. It would seem that the Peruvians cruised against the Americans, under the impression that Spain, then so dependent on England for her existence, would declare war speedily against the United States, in consequence of the war declared by the latter against the King of Great Britain, which might legalize their captures.

An interview with the master of the Walker satisfied Capt. Porter that the captured ships had been illegally seized; and hoisting American colours, he fired two shots over the Nereyda, when that vessel struck. Her crew were all sent on board the Essex, and the three ships stood in-shore to look into Coquimbo, in the hope of finding the Nimrod and her prizes, but without success. The next morning, the entire armament of the Nereyda, with all her ammunition, shot, small arms, and light sails, were thrown overboard, and she was otherwise put in a condition to do no harm, when she was released. It is worthy of remark, that the guns of this vessel were of iron, while her shot of all descriptions were of copper; the abundance of the latter in that part of the world, rendering it cheaper than the metal usually employed for such purposes.

From the master and crew of the Barclay, Capt. Porter obtained a list of such of the whaling vessels as they knew to be in the Pacific. It contained the names of twenty-three American, and of ten English ships. The former was probably the most correct, as his informants added that quite twenty Englishmen were thought to be in that sea. The latter were, in general, fine vessels, of near 400 tons burthen, and, as has been said already, they were all more or less armed.

Capt. Porter had now a double object—to protect

his countrymen, and to capture the enemy. The latter were known to resort to the Gallipagos, but he hesitated about striking a blow in that quarter, until he could be assured that the Standard, 64, had left Lima for England; and, as he thought the prizes of the Nimrod and Nereyda would endeavour to go into that port, he determined to make the best of his way thither, in order to cut them off, as well as to reconnoitre.

On the 28th of April, the ship was up with the island of San Gallan, where she hauled off to the northward and westward, with a view to cross the track of inward-bound vessels. The next day, three sail were made, standing for Callao. Every thing was set to cut the strangers off, particularly the one nearest in, who had the appearance of the Barclay. The chase, however, would have escaped, had she not been becalmed when she doubled the point of San Lorenzo. At this moment the frigate was near a league distant, but, fortunately, she kept the breeze until she had got within a hundred yards of the enemy, when she lowered down her boats, and took possession. The prize proved to be the Barclay, as had been expected. There was now a good opportunity of looking into the harbour, and finding that nothing had arrived from Valparaiso to disclose his presence in the Pacific, Captain Porter showed English colours, while the Barclay hoisted the American under the enemy's ensign. In this manner both vessels went into the offing, where the Barclay was given up to her proper officers, though most of her crew having entered in the Essex, and declining to rejoin the ship, her master preferred keeping in company with the frigate, offering to act as a pilot in searching for the enemy. With

this understanding, the two vessels stretched off the coast, to the northward and westward.

From the end of March until the middle of April, the Essex, with the Barclay in company, was standing across from the main towards the islands, and on the 17th, she made Chatham Island; but no ship was found there. From this place the frigate went to Charles's Island, where she had the same want of success. At the latter island, however, was a box called "the post-office," in which the masters of the whalers were accustomed to leave written accounts of their luck and movements, and much information was obtained from them, concerning the different ships in the Pacific.

The Essex continued passing from island to island, without meeting with any thing, until her crew was aroused by the cheering cry of "sail-ho!" on the morning of the 29th. A ship was made to the westward, and soon after two more a little further south. Chase was given to the first vessel, which was spoke under English colours, about nine a. m. She proved to be the British whale-ship Montezuma, with fourteen hundred barrels of oil on board. Throwing a crew into the prize, the Essex next made sail after the two other ships, which had taken the alarm, and endeavoured to escape. At eleven a. m., when the frigate was about eight miles from the two strangers, it fell calm, and the boats were hoisted out and sent against the enemy, under Mr. Downes, the first lieutenant. About two p. m., the party got within a mile of the nearest ship, when the two strangers, who were a quarter of a mile apart, hoisted English colours, and fired several guns. The boats now formed, and pulled for the largest ship, which kept training her guns on

them as they approached, but struck without firing a shot, just as the boarders were closing. The second vessel imitated her example, when attacked in the same manner*.

The prizes were the Georgiana and the Policy, both whalers; and the three ships, together, furnished the Essex with many important supplies. They had bread, beef, pork, cordage, water, and among other useful things, a great number of Gallipagos' tortoises.

The Georgiana had been built for the service of the English East India Company, and having the reputation of being a fast vessel, Captain Porter determined to equip her as a cruiser, with the double purpose of having an assistant in looking for the enemy, and of possessing a consort to relieve his own crew, in the event of any accident occurring to the Essex. This ship was pierced for eighteen guns, and had six mounted when taken. The Policy was also pierced for the same number, and had ten guns mounted. The latter were now added to the armament of the Georgiana, which gave her sixteen light guns. All the small arms were collected from the prizes and put in her, her try-works were taken down, and other alterations made, when Mr. Downes was placed in command, with a crew of forty-one men. By this arrangement, it was believed that the Georgiana would be fully able to capture any of the English letters of marque, known to be cruising among the islands. In consequence of these changes, and the manning the

* The reader may get an idea of a seaman's life, in these little incidents. In 1802, we have seen Captain Porter, as a lieutenant, going in boats, with Mr. Downes, then a midshipman, as an assistant, against Turks in the Mediterranean; and here we find the first, as a captain, directing the movements of the second, his first lieutenant, ten years later, in the Pacific, against Englishmen.

two other prizes, notwithstanding several enlistments, the crew of the Essex was reduced to two hundred and sixty-four souls, officers included. On the 8th of May, the Georgiana, 16, Lieutenant Com. Downes, hoisted the American pennant, and fired a salute of seventeen guns.

It being uncommonly fine weather, Captain Porter seized the opportunity of repairing his own ship, by means of the stores obtained from the enemy. The rigging was over-hauled and tarred down, many new spars were fitted, and the ship was painted in the middle of the Pacific, the enemy furnishing the means.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Essex and Georgiana—Numerous captures by those vessels.

A FEW trials, as soon as the ships made sail, proved that the Georgiana could not hold way with the Essex, and that her reputation, as a fast vessel, was unmerited. Still, as she had been relieved from much of her lumber, she outsailed the other ships, and hopes were entertained of her being made useful. Accordingly, on the 12th, she parted company, with orders to cruise against the enemy, and to rendezvous at different points on the coast, as well as at various islands, in a regular succession as to time. The separation was not long, however, the Georgiana looking into Charles's Island, in quest of English vessels, at a moment when the Essex happened to be there, on the same errand.

The Georgiana was now sent to Albemarle Island, Captain Porter having reason to suppose that a particular ship of the enemy was in that quarter. The chaplain, having been allowed to make a short scientific excursion in boats, fell in with a strange sail, on returning, and the Essex immediately went to sea in quest of her. But a cruise of several days was fruitless; and the ship continued passing among the islands, in the hope of falling in with something. An attempt to get across to the continent was defeated

by the lightness of the winds and the strength of the westerly currents; and on the 25th of May, the Essex was still in the neighbourhood of Charles's Island.

On the afternoon of the 28th, however a sail was made ahead, and a general chase was given, the Policy, Montezuma, and Barclay, being all in company. At sunset, the stranger was visible from the frigate's deck. By distributing the vessels in a proper manner, the chase was in sight next morning; and after a good deal of manœuvring, the Essex got alongside of her and captured the British whaler Atlantic, of 355 tons, 24 men, and 8 eighteen-pound carronades. This ship, however, was pierced for 20 guns.

Another strange sail had been made while in chase of the Atlantic, and she was pursued, and overtaken in the course of the night. This ship was the Greenwich, of 338 tons, 10 guns, and 25 men. Both the Atlantic and Greenwich had letters of marque, and being fast ships, were extremely dangerous to the American trade in the Pacific. When the Essex took these vessels, every officer but the captain, the chaplain, captain's clerk, and boatswain, were out of her, either in boats, or in prizes; the first having been lowered in a calm to chase, and left to be picked up by the Montezuma, when a breeze struck the frigate.

As Capt. Porter had now four large prizes in company, besides the Georgiana and the Barclay, it became necessary to put even the marine officer, Lieut. Gamble, in charge of one of them, when he shaped his course for Tumbez, on the continent, where he anchored on the 19th of June. Here the ships remained until the morning of the 24th, when three sail were discovered standing into the bay. As soon as they had got within two leagues, the leading vessel hove-to, and sent in a

boat, on board of which was Mr. Downes. By this arrival, an account of the movements of the Georgiana was obtained.

While cruising near James's Island, Mr. Downes had captured the British whale ships the Catharine, of 270 tons, 8 guns, and 29 men; and the Rose, of 220 tons, 8 guns, and 21 men. These two vessels were taken with no resistance, their masters having come on board the Georgiana, without suspecting her character. After manning his prizes, Mr. Downes had but 20 men and boys left in the Georgiana, when he chased and closed with a third whaler, called the Hector, a ship of 270 tons, 25 men, and 11 guns, though pierced for 20. At this time, Mr. Downes had also 50 prisoners, most of whom he was compelled to put in irons, before he brought the Hector to action*. When within hail, the latter ship was ordered to haul down her colours, but refused, and the Georgiana opened a fire upon her. A sharp little combat followed, when the Hector struck, with the loss of her main-top-mast, having had most of her standing and running rigging shot away. She had also 2 men killed, and 6 wounded.

After manning the Hector, Mr. Downes had but 10 men left in the Georgiana; and, including the wounded, he had 73 prisoners. The Rose being a dull ship, he threw overboard her guns, and most of her cargo, and parolling his prisoners, he gave her up to them, on condition that they should sail direct for St. Helena. As

* It is a curious fact, illustrative of the strong identity which exists between the feelings of English and American seamen, on certain points, that when the Georgiana went alongside of the Hector, in the night, it was under the impression that the latter was a Spanish cruiser, out of Lima, and the prisoners, to a man, volunteered to help flog her! Their services were declined, of course, but the offer appears to have been made in perfect good faith.

soon as this arrangement was made, he made sail for Tumbez, to join the Essex.

The little fleet now amounted to nine sail, and there was an opportunity to make new arrangements. The Atlantic being nearly 100 tons larger than the Georgiana, as well as a much faster ship, besides possessing in a greater degree every material quality for a cruiser, Mr. Downes and his crew were transferred to her. Twenty guns were mounted in this new sloop of war; she was named the Essex Junior, and manned with 60 men. The Greenwich was also converted into a store-ship, and all the spare stores of the other vessels were sent on board her. She was also armed with 20 guns, though her crew was merely strong enough to work her.

On the 30th the fleet sailed, the Essex and Essex Junior keeping in company, with all the carpenters at work at the latter. On the 4th of July, a general salute was fired, principally with the guns and ammunition of the enemy. On the 9th, the Essex Junior parted company, bound to Valparaiso, with the Hector, Catharine, Policy, and Montezuma, prizes, and the Barclay, recaptured ship, under convoy.

As soon as out of sight of the other ships, the Essex, Greenwich, and Georgiana steered to the westward, with an intention of going among the Gallipagos. On the 13th, three sail were made off Banks' Bay, all on a wind, and a good deal separated. The Essex gave chase to the one in the centre, which led her down to leeward, leaving the Greenwich and Georgiana a long distance astern and to windward. While the frigate was thus separated from her prizes, one of the strangers tacked, and endeavoured to cut the latter off, but the Greenwich hove-to, got a portion of

the people out of the Georgiana, and bore down boldly on her adversary; while the Essex continued after the vessel she was chasing, which she soon captured. This ship was the English whaler, Charlton, of 274 tons, 10 guns, and 21 men. Throwing a crew into her, the frigate immediately hauled her wind.

It was now ascertained from the prisoners, that the largest of the strange ships was the Seringapatam, of 357 tons, 14 guns, and near 40 men; and the smallest, the New-Zealander, of 259 tons, 8 guns, and 23 men. The Seringapatam had been built for a cruiser, and she was probably the most dangerous vessel to the American trade, to the westward of Cape Horn. Capt. Porter felt a corresponding desire to get possession of her, and was much gratified with the bold manner in which the Greenwich bore down on her. This ship was under the command of a very young officer, but he had the advice of one of the sea-lieutenants, who was under suspension, and who conducted with great gallantry and spirit on this occasion. Closing with the Seringapatam, the Essex being a long distance to leeward, the Greenwich brought her to action, and after a few broadsides, the English ship struck. Soon after, however, and before possession could be taken, she made an attempt to escape by passing to windward, in which she was frustrated by the perseverance of the Greenwich, which vessel kept close on the enemy's quarter, maintaining a spirited fire, for the number of men on board. As the Essex was coming up fast, the Seringapatam finally gave up the attempt, and running down to the frigate, again submitted.

In this affair, as in that of the boats, and in the capture of the Hector by the Georgiana, the officers and men engaged merited high encomiums for their

intrepidity and coolness. The Greenwich, after obtaining the hands from the Georgiana, did not probably muster five-and-twenty men at quarters, and the Seringapatam was much the better ship. The New-Zealander was taken without any difficulty.

The Seringapatam had made one prize, her master having turned his attention more to cruising than to whaling. On inquiry, notwithstanding, it was found that he had adopted this course in anticipation of a commission, having actually sailed without one. When this fact was ascertained, Capt. Porter put the master in irons, and he subsequently sent him to America to be tried. Finding himself embarrassed with his prisoners, Capt. Porter gave them up to the Charlton, and suffered them to proceed to Rio de Janeiro, under their parole. He then took the guns out of the New Zealander, and mounted them in the Seringapatam, by which means he gave the latter ship an armament of 22 guns, though, as in the case of the Greenwich, her people were barely sufficient to work her.

On the 25th of July, the Georgiana was despatched to the United States, with a full cargo of oil. In making up a crew for her, an opportunity was found of sounding the feelings of the men, whose times were nearly expired, and it was ascertained that few wished to profit by the circumstance. As soon as the vessels separated, the Essex, with the Greenwich, Seringapatam, and New-Zealander in company, shaped her course for Albemarle Island. On the morning of the 28th, another strange sail was discovered; but as she had a fresh breeze, and the frigate was becalmed, she was soon out of sight. When the wind came, however, the Essex ran in a direction to intercept the stranger; and the next morning he was again seen,

from the mast-head, standing across the Essex's bows, on a bow-line. As the wind was light, recourse was now had to the drags*, and the ship got within four miles of the chase, which was evidently an enemy's whaler. The stranger becoming alarmed, got his boats ahead to tow, when Capt. Porter sent a gig and whale-boat, with a few good marksmen in them, under acting lieutenant M'Knight, with orders to take a position ahead of the chase, and to drive in her boats, but on no account to attempt to board. This duty was handsomely executed, though the boats had great difficulty in maintaining their position within musket-shot, as the enemy got two guns on his forecastle, and kept up a warm discharge of grape.

At 4 p. m., the ships were little more than a league apart, perfectly becalmed, and Capt. Porter ordered the boats into the water, to carry the stranger by boarding. As the party drew near, the enemy commenced firing, but, intimidated by their steady and orderly approach, he soon lowered his ensign. The boats were about to take possession, when a breeze from the eastward suddenly striking the English ship, she hauled up close on a wind, hoisted her colours again, fired at the gig and whale-boat as she passed quite near them, and went off, at a rapid rate, to the northward. The party attempted to follow, but it was sun-set before the Essex got the wind, and, disliking to leave her boats out in the darkness, she was compelled to heave-to, at

* These drags were an invention of Capt. Porter's, and were often used during the cruise. A triangular canvass paddle, that had weights on one side, was connected with the sprit-sail-yard, and an out-rigger aft. When hauled upon aft, it forced the ship ahead, and a tricing line drew it forward again on the surface of the water, in the manner of a log-chip. The Essex could be urged through the water two knots by this process, though it was found to be excessively laborious.

9, in order to hoist them in. The next morning, the chase was out of sight.

This was the first instance, since her arrival in the Pacific, in which the Essex had failed in getting alongside of a chase, that she did not voluntarily abandon. It produced much mortification, though the escape of the enemy was owing to one of those occurrences, so common in summer, that leave one ship without a breath of air, while another, quite near her, has a good breeze.

On the 4th of August, the ships went into James's Island and anchored. Here Capt. Porter made the important discovery, that a large portion of his powder had been damaged in doubling Cape Horn. Fortunately, the Seringapatam could supply the deficiency, though, in doing so, that ship was rendered nearly defenceless. On the 22nd of August, all the vessels proceeded to Banks's Bay, where the prizes were moored, and the Essex sailed on a short cruise, alone, on the 24th.

After passing among the islands, without meeting any thing, a sail was discovered on the morning of the 15th of September, apparently lying-to, a long distance to the southward and to windward. The Essex was immediately disguised, by sending down some of the light yards, and the ship kept turning to windward, under easy sail. At meridian, the vessels were so near each other, that the stranger was ascertained to be a whaler, in the act of cutting in. He was evidently drifting down fast on the frigate. At 1 p. m., when the ships were about four miles apart, the stranger cast off from the whales, and made all sail to windward. As it was now evident that he had taken the alarm, the Essex threw aside all attempts at disguise,

and pursued him, under every thing that would draw By 4 p. m. the frigate had the stranger within reach of her guns, and a few shot, well thrown, brought him down under her lee. This ship was the Sir Andrew Hammond, of 301 tons, 12 guns, and 31 men; and she proved to be the vessel that had escaped, in the manner previously related. Fortunately, the prize had a large supply of excellent beef, pork, bread, wood, and water, and the Essex got out of her an ample stock of those great necessaries. On returning to Banks's Bay with her prize, the ship shortly after was joined by the Essex Junior, on her return from Valparaiso. By this arrival, Capt. Porter discovered that several enemy's vessels of force had sailed in pursuit of him; and having, by this time, captured nearly all the English whalers of which he could obtain intelligence, he determined to proceed to the Marquesas, in order to refit, and to make his preparations for returning to America. He was urged to adopt this resolution, also, by understanding from Mr. Downes, that the government of Chili no longer preserved the appearance of amity towards the United States, but was getting to be English in its predilections.

CHAPTER XV.

Important services of the Essex—Conflicts in the Island of Nooaheevah—Action between the Phœbe and Essex—Arrangement between Captain Porter and Captain Hillyar—Critical situation of Mr. Gamble and his party.

On the 23rd of October, the group of the Marquesas was made from the mast-head of the Essex, and after passing among the islands for a few days, Capt. Porter took his ships into a fine bay of Nooaheevah, where he anchored. Here he was soon after joined by the Essex Junior, which vessel had parted company to cruise, when he believed himself sufficiently secure to commence a regular overhauling of the different ships.

The situation of the Essex was sufficiently remarkable, at this moment, to merit a brief notice. She had been the first American to carry the pennant of a man-of-war round the Cape of Good Hope, and now she had been the first to bring it into this distant ocean. More than ten thousand miles from home, without colonies, stations, or even a really friendly port to repair to, short of stores, without a consort, and otherwise in possession of none of the required means of subsistence and efficiency, she had boldly steered into this distant region, where she had found all that she required, through her own activity; and having swept the seas of her enemies, she had now retired to these little frequented islands to refit, with the security of a ship at home. It is due to the officer, who so promptly

adopted, and so successfully executed this plan, to add, that his enterprise, self-reliance, and skill, indicated a man of bold and masculine conception, of great resources, and of a high degree of moral courage; qualities that are indispensable in forming a naval captain.

In the way of service to the public, perhaps the greatest performed by the Essex, was in protecting the American ships in the Pacific, nearly all of which would probably have fallen into the hands of the enemy, but for her appearance in that ocean. But the positive injury done the English commerce, was far from trifling. The Essex had now captured about 4000 tons of its shipping, made near 400 prisoners, and for the moment, had literally destroyed its fisheries in this part of the world. In October 1812, she had sailed from America alone, with six months' provisions, and the usual stores in her; and in October 1813, she was lying, in perfect security, at an Island of the Pacific, with a respectable consort, surrounded by prizes, and in possession of all the means that were necessary to render a frigate of her class efficient. Throughout the whole of these movements, we see a constant tendency to distress the enemy, and to maintain the character of the ship, as an active, well-organized, and high-toned man-of-war.

It is an incident worthy of being mentioned, in the history of this unusual cruise, that when the Essex stood into the land, in first approaching the Marquesas, a boat came off with three white men in her, one of whom proved to be Mr. John Maury, a midshipman of the navy, who had been left by the master of an American trader, himself a lieutenant in the service, to gather sandal-wood, while the ship was gone to China.

As it was supposed the war would prevent the return of his ship, Mr. Maury and his party were received on board the frigate*.

The island of Nooaheevah, on which Capt. Porter landed his stores, was intersected by valleys, and different tribes possessed them, forming distinct communities, which not unfrequently waged war on each other, converting this little and retired fragment of the earth into an epitome of the passions and struggles of the world beyond it. In consequence of his intimate connection with the inhabitants of the valley in which he was accidentally thrown, Capt. Porter was compelled to join in these hostilities, the assailants of his allies beginning to treat him as an enemy. After some fruitless negociating, a party was sent against the hostile tribe, and several conflicts occurred, in which the armed seamen and marines prevailed, as a matter of course, though not without a sharp resistance. This success quieted the island; and during the remainder of his stay, Capt. Porter appears to have been unmolested.

It has been seen, that the Essex reached the Marquesas at the close of October, and in the early part of December she was again ready for sea. In the course of November, the New-Zealander was filled with oil from the other prizes, and despatched for America, under the charge of a master's mate†. Shortly after,

* The officer in command of the merchant-men, was Mr. Lewis, then a lieutenant, and subsequently, a master and commander. Mr. Maury was promoted not long after, and lost his life by yellow fever, while first lieutenant of a vessel on the West India station. Both these gentlemen were much respected in the service.

† Both the Georgiana and New-Zealander were recaptured on the American coast.

a fort was constructed on a small conical hill, near the water, when the Seringapatam, Sir Andrew Hammond, and Greenwich, were warped close in, and moored under its guns. The command of this fort was given to Lieut. John M. Gamble, of the marines, a spirited and intelligent young officer; and Messrs. Feltus and Clapp, two of the midshipmen, with twenty-one men, were put under his orders, having volunteered to remain on the island during the contemplated cruise of the Essex. This arrangement was made to secure the means of future repairs, as it was now believed that no more whalers were to be found, and the Essex was going to sea, in the expectation of meeting one of the frigates that it was known had been sent into the Pacific, in pursuit of her.

The Essex, and Essex Junior, quitted the harbour of Nooaheevah, on the 12th of December, 1813, bound for the coast of South America, which was made early in January. After watering at San Maria, and looking into Conception, the ships proceeded to Valparaiso. Up to this time, not a dollar had been drawn for, to meet the expenses of the frigate. The enemy had furnished provisions, sails, cordage, medicines, guns, anchors, cables, and slops. A considerable amount of pay had even been given to the officers and men, by means of the money taken in the Nocton. Thus far, the cruise had been singularly useful and fortunate, affording an instance of the perfection of naval warfare, in all that relates to distressing an enemy, with the least possible charge to the assailants; and it remained only to terminate it with a victory, over a ship of equal force, to render it brilliant. It is, perhaps, a higher eulogium on the officers and crew of this

memorable little frigate to add, that while her good fortune appeared at last to desert her, they gave this character to their enterprise, by the manner in which they struggled with adversity.

After the arrival at Valparaiso, it was found that the feelings of the Chilian government had taken an entirely new direction, as had been reported by Mr. Downes, favouring on all occasions the interest of the English, in preference to those of the Americans. Without paying much regard to this circumstance, however, Capt. Porter determined to remain in, or off, the port, in waiting for the Phœbe, 36, Capt. Hillyar, one of the ships sent out in quest of him, under the impression that her commander would not fail, sooner or later, to seek him at that place. There was also the prospect of intercepting such of the English traders as might happen to touch at the port.

The Phœbe arrived as was expected, but instead of coming alone, she had the Cherub, 20, Capt. Tucker, in company. When these ships hove in sight, the Essex Junior was cruising off the harbour, and she came in and anchored. As the Phœbe alone was a vessel of a heavier rate than the Essex, this addition to her force, put a conflict between the four ships quite out of the question. Capt. Porter, who had every opportunity of observing the armaments of the two English vessels, states, in his official communications to the department, that the Phœbe mounted 30 long eighteens, 16 thirty-two pound carronades, with 1 howitzer, and 6 threes, in her tops. This was a forced equipment for a ship of her rate, but she had probably taken in extra guns, with a view to meet the Essex *.

* The regular armament of an English 36, would have been 26 long eighteens below, 16 thirty-two pound carronades, and two

Her crew is said to have consisted of 320 souls. The Cherub, 20, mounted 18 thirty-two pound carronades below, with 8 twenty-four pound carronades and 2 long nines above, making a total of 28 guns, and her crew mustered 180 men and boys. In consequence of the number of prizes that had been manned, some deaths that had occurred, and the people placed in the Essex Junior, the American frigate could muster but 255 souls, notwithstanding the enlistments she had made from the whalers. The force of the Essex Junior was too inconsiderable to be relied on, in an action against frigate-built ships of a metal as heavy as that of the enemy. She mounted 10 eighteen pound carronades and 10 short sixes, with a crew of 60 souls. Her guns would have been of little service in a frigate action.

As the Phœbe came in, the wind was light, and she passed quite near the Essex, with her people at quarters. Capt. Hillyar hailed, and inquired after the health of Capt. Porter. After making the usual reply, the latter informed the English officer that if the vessels got foul, much confusion would ensue, and that he could not be answerable for the consequences. Capt. Hillyar now observed that he did not meditate any attack, though

chase guns above, or 44 guns in all. It would seem that the Phœbe had added two eighteens, making 46. The regular armament of a 32, was 26 long twelves below, 16 thirty-two pound carronades and two chase guns above. Some thirty-twos, however, mount but 40 guns, the difference in the rate depending more on the metal than on the number of the guns. As a rule, the long twelve is thought to be the equivalent of a thirty-two pound carronade, though there are circumstances in which each is preferable to the other. The Essex had in her, on this occasion, 40 thirty-two pound carronades, and six long twelves. Even with this change, the Phœbe was probably her superior, under the ordinary chances of naval warfare, in the proportion of about four to three.

the manner in which this was uttered, does not appear to have quieted the suspicions of the American officers. While the two vessels and their crews were in this novel position, the Phœbe was taken suddenly aback, and her bows payed off directly upon the Essex. Capt. Porter immediately called away his boarders, and for a few minutes there was every appearance of a combat in a neutral port.

A great deal of confusion is said to have existed on board the Phœbe, and her commander was earnest in his protestations of an intention not to have recourse to hostilities, while he handled his yards in a way to get a stern board on his ship. As she fell off, the jib-boom of the Phœbe passed over the Essex's deck, and she lay, for a short time, with her bows exposed to the whole broadside of the American frigate, and her stern to that of the Essex Junior. Capt. Porter declining to profit by his advantage, the Phœbe was enabled to get out of her awkward situation, there being no doubt that she had lain entirely at the mercy of her enemies. There can be little question that this extraordinary occurrence would have fully justified the American ship in having recourse to her means of defence*.

The English ships, having obtained some supplies, went outside, and cruised off Valparaiso for six weeks. During this time, the Essex made several attempts to engage the Phœbe alone, sometimes by bringing her to action with the Essex Junior in company, and at others, by bringing her to action singly, having the

* From all that passed, then and subsequently, the officers of the Essex appear to have been generally persuaded that Capt. Hillyar had positive orders to capture the American ship, without regard to the neutrality of the South American ports.

crew of the Essex Junior on board the frigate. Capt. Porter ascertained, to his satisfaction, that he could easily outsail either of the enemy's vessels, but his object was not so much to escape, as to capture the Phœbe, which he had reason to think he might do, could he bring her to close action, without her consort's interference. On the 27th of February, the Cherub being nearly a league dead to leeward of her, the Phœbe ran close in, hove-to off the port, hoisted a motto flag, and fired a gun to windward, when the Essex immediately weighed and stood out of the harbour, and answered the weather gun of the enemy. On this occasion, the ships got within gun-shot of each other, and the American frigate opened her fire, when the Phœbe ran down and joined her consort. This conduct excited a good deal of feeling among the officers of the Essex, who rightly judged that the challenge should not have been given, if it were not the intention of the enemy to engage singly. Taking all the circumstances in connexion, there can be little question that Capt. Hillyar had been positively instructed not to fight the Essex alone, if he could possibly avoid it. As he bore the character of a good and brave officer, it is not easy to find any other reasonable solution of the course he pursued. His challenge off the port, was probably intended as a *ruse de guerre*, to get the Essex into his power; for demonstrations of this nature are not subject to the severe laws which regulate more precise defiances to combat*.

* In consequence of this affair, some explanations passed between the ships, when the English officers alleged that the gun to windward had been fired as a signal to the Cherub. This is quite possible, but under the peculiar circumstances, little doubt exists that Capt. Hillyar acted under precise instructions not to engage the Essex singly.

Having heard that several other cruisers of the enemy might soon be expected, Capt. Porter now determined to go to sea, on the first good occasion, and by leading the Phœbe and Cherub off the coast, to allow the Essex Junior to follow. This plan was formed on the 27th March, and the very next day the wind came on to blow fresh from the southward, when the Essex parted her larboard bower, and dragged the other anchor directly out to sea. The harbour of Valparaiso opens to the northward, being formed by a head-land on its western side, and a cove that makes to the southward within it; the main coast sweeping round to the north and east again, affording the necessary protection. On the 28th of March, when the accident just mentioned occurred, the enemy's ships were at no great distance off the point, though far enough to allow the Essex to fetch past to windward of them, by hugging the land. The Point of Angels, however, is an exceedingly dangerous bluff to double, and most ships deem it prudent to reef, before going round it, on account of the liability to sudden and violent squalls.

As there was no time to lose, sail was got on the Essex, when, on opening the enemy, Capt. Porter took in his top-gallant-sails, hauled close by the wind, and made an attempt to pass out, by keeping his weatherly position. Every thing looked promising for a short

No stress ought to be laid on the different challenges that passed between the American and English ships, as they might all be satisfactorily explained, perhaps, but no incident of the war so unanswerably shows the character obtained by the American navy, at this time, as the fact that a 36 declined meeting a 32, in single combat. Two years earlier, the Cherub would probably have sought an action with the Essex.

time; and there is little question that the ship would have gone clear, but, in doubling the head-land, a squall carried away the main-top-mast, throwing several men into the sea, all of whom were drowned. Nothing remained, of course, but to endeavour to regain the port, or to fight both the enemy's ships, under the additional disadvantage of being already crippled.

Finding it impossible to beat up to the common anchorage, in his present condition, in time to avoid the enemy, Capt. Porter stood across the entrance of the harbour, to its north-eastern side, where he let go an anchor, about three miles from the town, a mile and a half from the Castello Viego, which, however, was concealed by a bluff, half a mile from a detached battery of one twenty-four pound gun, and within pistol shot of the shore. Notwithstanding this position, the enemy continued to approach, and it soon became evident, by the motto flags and jacks he set, that it was his serious intention to engage. The Essex, in consequence, cleared for action, and attempted to get a spring on her cable, but had not succeeded in effecting this important object, when the Phœbe, having obtained an advantageous position, nearly astern, about 4 p. m., opened her fire, at long shot. At the same time, the Cherub commenced the action on the starboard bow. The fire of the Phœbe, from the double advantage she possessed in her long guns and her station, became very destructive, as scarce a gun from the Essex could touch her. The Cherub, however, was soon driven off, when she ran down to leeward, and engaged from a position near that taken by the Phœbe. Three long twelves were got out aft, and they played with so much effect on the enemy, that at the end of

half an hour, both his ships hauled off the land to repair damages. This important fact, which is affirmed by the Americans, is sufficiently corroborated by the accounts of the enemy*.

During this first attack, the Essex, through the great exertions of the master and boatswain, had succeeded in getting springs on the cable no less than three different times, but before the ship's broadside could be sprung to bear, they were as often shot away. The ship also received a great deal of injury, and several men had been killed and wounded. Notwithstanding all the disastrous circumstances under which they engaged, and the superior force opposed to them, the officers and crew of the Essex were animated by the best spirit, and it was not possible for efforts to be more coolly made, or better directed.

The enemy was not long in making his repairs, and both ships next took a position on the starboard quarter of the Essex, where it was not in the power of the latter vessel to bring a single gun to bear upon him, as he was too distant to be reached by carronades. His fire was very galling, and it left no alternative to Capt. Porter, between submission, and running down to assail him. He gallantly decided on the latter. But by this time the Essex had received many serious injuries, in addition to the loss of her top-mast. Her top-sail sheets, top-sail halyards, jib and fore-topmast-stay-sail halyards had all been shot away. The only sail that could be got upon the ship to make her head pay off was the flying jib, which was hoisted, when

* It is due to the English commander to say, that he gave a very frank and fair account of the action.

the cable was cut, and the vessel edged away, with the intention of laying the Phœbe aboard.

The fore-topsail and fore-sail were now let fall, though, for want of tacks and sheets, they were nearly useless. Still the Essex drove down on her assailants, closing near enough to open with her carronades. For a few minutes, the firing on both sides was tremendous, the people of the Essex proving their discipline and gallantry, at that trying moment, in a way to justify all the high expectations that had been formed of them, though their decks were already strewed with killed, and the cockpit was crowded with the wounded. This work proved too hot for the Cherub, which hauled off a second time, nor did she come near enough to use her carronades again, during the remainder of the action, keeping up a distant fire with her long guns.

The Phœbe discovered no disposition to throw away the immense advantage she possessed, in her long eighteens; and when she found the Essex's fire becoming warm, she kept edging away, throwing her shot at the same time, with fatal effect, cutting down the people of her antagonist, almost with impunity to herself. By this time, many of the guns of the American ship were disabled by shot, and the crews of several had been swept away. One particular gun was a scene of carnage that is seldom witnessed in a naval combat, no less than fifteen men, or three entire crews, falling at it, in the course of the action; its captain alone escaped with a slight wound.

This scene of almost unresisting carnage had now lasted near two hours, and, finding it impossible to close with his adversary, who chose his distance at pleasure, Capt. Porter felt the necessity of taking some

prompt measure, if he would prevent the enemy from getting possession of his ship. The wind had got more to the westward, and he saw a hope of running her ashore, at a spot where he might land his people, and set her on fire. For a few minutes, every thing appeared to favour this design, and the Essex had drifted within musket-shot of the beach, when the wind suddenly shifted from the land, paying the ship's head broad off, in a way to leave her exposed to a dreadful raking fire. Still, as she was again closing with the Phœbe, Capt. Porter indulged a hope of finally laying that ship aboard. At this moment, Lieut. Com. Downes came alongside the Essex, in order to receive the orders of his commanding officer, having pulled through all the fire, in order to effect this object. He could be of no use, for the enemy again put his helm up, and kept away, when Mr. Downes, after remaining in the Essex ten minutes, was directed to return to his own ship, and to make preparations to defend, or, at need, to destroy her. On going away, he carried off several of the Essex's wounded, leaving three of his own men behind him, in order to make room in the boat.

The slaughter in the Essex having got to be horrible, the enemy firing with deliberation, and hulling her at almost every shot, Capt. Porter, as a last resort, ordered a hawser to be bent to the sheet anchor, and the latter let go, in order to bring the head of the ship round. This effected the object, and once more the Americans got their broadside to bear, remaining stationary themselves, while their enemy, a good deal crippled, was drifting slowly to leeward. Even in those desperate circumstances, a ray of hope gleamed through this

little advantage, and Capt. Porter was beginning to believe that the Phœbe would drift out of gun-shot, before she discovered his expedient, when the hawser parted with the strain.

There was no longer any chance of saving the ship. To add to her distress, she was on fire, the flames coming up both the main and the forward hatchways; and, for a few minutes, it was thought she must consume. An explosion of powder also occurred below, to add to the horrors of the scene, and Capt. Porter told his people that, in preference to being blown up, all who chose to incur the risk, might make the attempt to reach the shore by swimming. Many availed themselves of the permission, and some succeeded in effecting their escape. Others perished, while a few, after drifting about on bits of spars, were picked up by the boats of the enemy. Much the greater part of the crew, however, remained in the ship, and they set about an attempt to extinguish the flames; the shot of the enemy committing its havoc the whole time. Fortunately, the fire was got under, when the few brave men who were left, went again to the long guns.

The moment had now arrived, when Capt. Porter was to decide between submission, or the destruction of the remainder of his people. In the midst of this scene of slaughter, he had himself been untouched, and it would seem that he felt himself called on to resist, as long as his own strength allowed. But his remaining people entreated him to remember his wounded, and he at last consented to summon his officers. Only one, Act. Lieut. M'Knight, could join him on the quarter-deck! The first lieutenant, Mr. Wilmer, had been knocked overboard by a splinter, and drowned,

while getting the sheet anchor from the bows; Act. Lieut. Cowell, the next in rank, was mortally wounded; Act. Lieut. Odenheimer had just been knocked overboard from the quarter, and did not regain the vessel for several minutes. The reports of the state of the ship were fearful. A large portion of the guns were disabled, even had there been men left to fight them. The berth deck, steerage, ward-room, and cockpit, were full of wounded; and the latter were even killed by shot, while under the surgeon's hands. The carpenter was sent for, and he stated that of his crew, he alone could perform any duty. He had been over the side to stop shot-holes, when his slings had been cut away, and he narrowly escaped drowning. In short, seventy-five men, officers included, were all that remained for duty; and the enemy, in perfectly smooth water, was firing his long eighteens, at a nearly unresisting ship, with as much precision as he could have discharged them at a target. It had become an imperative duty to strike, and the colours were accordingly hauled down, after one of the most remarkable combats that is to be found in the history of naval warfare.

In this bloody contest, the Essex had fifty-eight men killed, including those who soon died of their hurts, and sixty-six wounded, making a total of a hundred and twenty-four, or nearly half of all who were on board at the commencement of the action. Of the missing there were thirty-one, most of whom were probably drowned, either in attempting to swim ashore, when the ship was on fire, or by being knocked overboard by splinters, or pieces of the rigging. Including the missing, the entire loss was a hundred and fifty-two, out of two hundred and fifty-five.

The Essex, with a very trifling exception while closing, fought this battle with her six long twelves, opposed by fifteen long eighteens in broadside, the long guns of the Cherub, and, a good deal of the time, or while they lay on her quarter, by the carronades of both the enemy's ships. Captain Hillyar's published official letter makes the loss of the Phœbe, four killed and seven wounded; that of the Cherub, one killed and three wounded. There is no apparent reason for distrusting this account, as Captain Hillyar's official letter was singularly modest and just. Captain Tucker, of the Cherub, was wounded, and the first lieutenant of the Phœbe was killed. The English ships were cut up more than could have been expected under the circumstances, the latter having received no less than eighteen twelve-pound shot below the water-line. It would seem that the smoothness of the water rendered the fire very certain, on both sides, and it is only to be regretted that the Essex could not have engaged under her three top-sails, from the commencement. The engagement lasted nearly two hours and a-half, the long guns of the Essex, it is said, having been fired no less than seventy-five times each, in broadside. The enemy must have thrown, agreeably to the statements made at the time, not less than seven hundred eighteen-pound shot, at the Essex.

The battle was witnessed by thousands from the shore; and so near were all the ships to the land, that, at one time, many of the Phœbe's eighteen-pound shot struck the beach. This fact appears to be well authenticated, and, of itself, it settles the question of a violation of the neutrality of Chili; since even they who maintain the doctrine that jurisdiction does not

properly extend three leagues to sea, substitute the greatest range of a shot, or a shell, in their place. During the action, Mr. Poinsett, the American consul, repaired to the governor's, and asked the protection of the batteries in behalf of the Essex. He received the evasive answer, that, should the ship succeed in reaching the ordinary anchorage, an officer would be sent to the British commander, requesting him to cease his fire. The governor, however, declined resorting to force, under any circumstances. This conduct left no doubt of a collusion between the English officers and the local authorities, and Mr. Poinsett took the first occasion to quit the country.

In the mode in which he fought his ship, though it was much criticised at the time, Captain Hillyar discovered seamanship, and a strict attention to his duty; though his situation must have been in the last degree painful, while compelled to avoid meeting the Essex singly, under circumstances that admit of no other construction than an obedience to the most rigid orders.

Captain Porter now entered into an arrangement with Captain Hillyar, under the provisions of which, the Essex Junior was converted into a cartel, and a passport was given, by means of which all the survivors of the Essex came home. From this arrangement, however, Act. Lieut. M'Knight, Mr. Adams, the chaplain, and Mr. Lyman, a master's mate, were exempted; these three gentlemen, and eleven seamen, being exchanged on the spot, for a part of the people of the Sir Andrew Hammond, who were then prisoners in the Essex Junior. Mr. M'Knight and Mr. Lyman went round to Rio de Janeiro, in the

Phœbe, in order to give some testimony in behalf of the captors. We shall have occasion to advert to the two last-mentioned gentlemen hereafter.

The Essex Junior left Valparaiso shortly after this arrangement, encountering no difficulty in doubling the Horn. She was brought to, off New York, by the Saturn razée, Capt. Nash. This officer, at first, questioned the authority of Capt. Hillyar to grant the passport, under which the Essex Junior was sailing, and he directed that ship to lie by him during the night. After some communications, the next morning, when thirty miles from the beach, Capt. Porter put off in a whale-boat, and, though chased, by pulling vigorously for the land, he got ashore on Long Island, escaping in a fog. It does not appear, however, to have been the intention of Capt. Nash seriously to detain the Essex Junior. He probably distrusted some artifice, as he permitted the ship to proceed, after again examining her papers.

Thus terminated this enterprising and singular cruise, its end proving as disastrous as its commencement had been fortunate, though it was, at all times, highly creditable to the spirit, resources, self-reliance, and zeal of those engaged in it. Before quitting the subject, however, it remains to give a brief account of the fortunes of the officers and men left at Nooaheevah, with the three prizes, the Greenwich, the Sir Andrew Hammond, and the Seringapatam, under the orders of Lieut. Gamble, of the marines.

The Essex had no sooner disappeared, than the savages began to pilfer, and to betray a turbulent disposition. Mr. Gamble was compelled to land a party, and to bring the natives to terms by a show of force.

Fortunately, this object was effected without firing a musket. In February, one of the small party left was drowned, reducing their number to twenty-two, the officers included. Not long after this event, four of the men deserted in a whale-boat, carrying off with them several small articles of value. But eighteen now remained.

On the 12th of April, Mr. Gamble began to rig the Seringapatam, and the Sir Andrew Hammond, with the intention of quitting the islands, the long absence of the Essex inducing him to despair of her return. Some symptoms of a mutiny now began to show themselves, and he had all the arms and ammunition brought on board the Greenwich, in which vessel he lived; but having occasion to be on board the Seringapatam, on the 7th of May, a party of six men rose, and took the ship from him. During the time Mr. Gamble was in the hands of these men, he was badly wounded in the foot by a pistol ball, and they succeeded in carrying off the Seringapatam, sending the officer, and the people with him, on board another vessel.

Every exertion was now made to get to sea with the Sir Andrew Hammond; but, on the 9th, the natives made an attack, and Mr. Feltus, with three men, were killed, and one other was severely wounded. The situation of those that remained, now became exceedingly critical, the whole party consisting of only eight individuals, of whom two were badly wounded, one was a cripple, and another was just recovering from a serious attack of the scurvy. In fact, there were but four men on board the Sir Andrew Hammond fit for duty. The jib and spanker were bent as

fast as possible, the moorings were cut, and, under that short sail, the ship passed slowly out to sea, under cover of the night. When safe in the offing, but six cartridges were left, the Seringapatam having carried off most of the ammunition in kegs.

To add to the difficulties of his situation, Mr. Gamble had no chart. He made out to reach the Sandwich Islands, however, in seventeen days, where he was captured by the Cherub, and first learned the fate of the Essex. The Americans continued seven months in this ship, until they were landed at Rio de Janeiro, from which port Mr. Gamble got to New York, late in August 1815.

Having now closed the history of the three ships that sailed under the orders of Com. Bainbridge, it becomes necessary to return to the commencement of the year 1812, deferring, however, an account of the proceedings on the different lakes, to another portion of the work, in order to preserve the connexion that is necessary to clearness and interest.

CHAPTER XVI.

Questionable Policy—Captain Stewart in the Constellation—Preparations for defending this frigate—Cruise of the Chesapeake—Captain Broke's challenge to Captain Lawrence—Action between the Shannon and Chesapeake.

THE effect of the successes of the navy on the public mind has been already shown. The nation was well disposed to contribute freely to the enlargement of this branch of the general service; and, encouraged by this feeling, the administration had so far extended its policy as to recommend the construction of four ships of the line. Although few of the more important political objects of a war can be looked for without vessels of force, it may be questioned if, under the particular circumstances of the country, the building of heavy ships, at that precise moment, was the wisest policy that could be adopted. The public finances were hardly in a state to meet the sudden and heavy demands that a fleet of any force would make, and to put to sea a few solitary two-deckers, out of distant ports, to cruise without concert, would have been to betray a great want of the ability to combine, as well as a singular feebleness of purpose. The first object to

be obtained by vessels of force, would be to prevent blockades, and to render descents on the coast too hazardous to be attempted. Failing in the means to effect these important ends, or at least to render an attempt to thwart them too precarious in the eyes of the enemy, a discreet view of the interests of the country would seem to point out the expediency of adopting a different species of force, in order to ensure the next most practicable benefit that circumstances allowed. When a community neglects the golden opportunity for achieving any important measure, like an individual similarly situated, it must be content to do all it can, and to abandon the design of doing what it desires. Such, virtually, was the condition of America at that moment; and, while the governing necessity of possessing vessels of force, ought never to be lost sight of, among a maritime people, it may well be doubted whether the money expended in constructing two or three large ships, during the years 1813 and 1814, might not have been far more discreetly used in fitting out fifteen or twenty fast sailing light cruisers; vessels that might have been built and equipped in a few weeks, and which would be almost certain of getting to sea*.

* It is worthy of remark, that while three of the eight efficient frigates the United States owned soon after the commencement of the war (including one captured from the enemy) were blockaded, no sloop of war was prevented from getting to sea. The first great object of the government should be to prevent blockades altogether; its next, to employ vessels that cannot be blockaded.

It has been seen, that the declaration of war found the naval preparations in so imperfect a condition, that the Constellation, 38, Chesapeake, 38, and Adams, 28, were not ready even to receive crews, while it was found necessary to rebuild entirely the New York, 36, Boston, 28, and General Greene, 28. The appropriations for the repairs of the three first ships having been made in March 1812, the Constellation was equipped and manned at Washington, in the course of the season. When Com. Bainbridge left her for the Constitution, the command of this ship had been given to Capt. Stewart, the officer who had served as second in command under Com. Preble, during most of the operations of that celebrated captain, before Tripoli. In the course of the month of January 1813, Capt. Stewart dropped down the river with an intention to get to sea, but on reaching St. Mary's, an order was received, that induced him to go to Annapolis, in order to examine his powder. From this place, the ship was directed to proceed to Norfolk. In executing this order, the Constellation anchored in Hampton Roads, and the next morning a fleet of the enemy, consisting of several two-decked ships, frigates, and sloops-of-war, came in and anchored off Willoughby's Point, where they were becalmed. While the English ships were waiting for the turn of the tide, the Constellation was kedged up until she grounded on the flats above, and the same night, when the tide floated her, she was carried up, and anchored between the forts at Norfolk.

A few days later, the Constellation dropped down

abreast of Craney Island, with a view to cover the fortifications then erecting at that place. At this time, the enemy was still lying in force in Hampton Roads. The ship being much exposed, it being at all times practicable for the enemy to attempt carrying her by surprise, Capt. Stewart felt the necessity of using great precautions for her protection. As the manner in which the frigate was prepared for defence, on this occasion, was highly appreciated for its skilful and seaman-like dispositions, it is thought worthy of being particularly mentioned.

The Constellation was anchored in the middle of the channel, which is quite narrow, and on each side of her were moored seven gun-boats, on board of which were placed officers and men belonging to the ship. A circle of booms, securely fastened, protected the gun-boats from being boarded, which would enable them to maintain a flanking fire, on all assailants of the frigate. The gun-deck guns of the latter were housed, and the ports were shut in. Great care was taken that no rope should be permitted to be hanging over the side of the vessel, the stern ladders were taken away, and even the gangway-cleets were removed. Boarding nettings were made of twenty-one thread ratlin-stuff, that had been boiled in half-made pitch, which rendered it so hard as almost to defy the knife. To give greater security, nail rods and small chains were secured to the netting, in lines about three feet apart. Instead of tricing to the rigging, this netting was spread out-board, towards the yard-arms, rising about twenty-

five feet above the deck. To the outer rope, or ridge-line of the netting, were secured pieces of kentledge, with the idea that by cutting the tricing lines when the enemy should get alongside, his boats and men might be caught beneath, by the fall of the weights. Pieces of kentledge were also suspended forward, from the spritsail-yard, bowsprit, &c. &c., to prevent boats from lying beneath, while the netting was here hoisted to the fore-stay. The carronades were charged to the muzzles with musket balls, and depressed to the nearest range, in order to sweep the water around the ship, As the frigate was light, and unusually high out of the water, it was the opinion of the best judges, that defended as she would certainly have been, under the officers who were in her, she could not have been carried without a loss of several hundred men to the enemy, if she could have been carried by boats at all.

It would appear, notwithstanding, that the enemy was disposed to make the attempt. A large force of British ships having collected in the Roads, the admirals in command seriously contemplated an assault on the Constellation, after she had been a few days in her exposed situation. Fortunately, Capt. Stewart received notice of their intentions. A Portuguese had been stopped by the fleet, on his way to sea, and his ship was anchored at the upper part of the roads, just out of gun-shot of the frigate. On board this vessel, the Admiral kept a guard and a look-out, to signal the movements above. An American passenger, on board the Portuguese, learned, from the conversation of

different officers, their designs on the Constellation, and he found means to get on board the frigate to apprise her of the enemy's plan, handsomely volunteering to remain in the ship, to help defend her *. Of course the guard-boats were enjoined to be more vigilant than ever, and every thing was got ready to give the enemy a warm reception.

The night succeeding the notice was star-light, and nothing was attempted. The next morning, the master of the Portuguese stopped alongside of the frigate, on his way to Norfolk, and stated that a large number of boats had collected at his ship the previous evening, but that the expedition had been deferred until that night, which promised to be dark and drizzling. Accordingly the guard-boat was on the look out, and it fell in with a division of boats, that was supposed to contain from 1500 to 2000 men. As soon as the enemy was seen, the officer in the boat showed two lanterns on the off-side of his cutter, and all hands were called in the ship. It would seem that the enemy ascertained that his approach was discovered, and he retired.

The following night, the attempt was renewed, with the same want of success. A few nights later, it again proved dark and drizzling, and a third expedition came up. On this occasion, Mr. B. J. Neale, the second lieutenant of the Constellation, was in the guard-boat,

* The name of this gentleman deserves to be honourably mentioned. It was Mr. March, of the mercantile firm of March and Benson, New York.

and he edged close in with the enemy, who discovered him. As soon as the word of "a stranger," was passed, the people of the cutter sprang to their oars, and pulled out of sight, but finding he was not pursued, Mr. Neale returned and kept company with the brigade of boats, which passed up on the inside of the flats, above the mouth of Tanner's creek, and anchored at no great distance below the forts *. Here many of the officers landed, and walked about to keep themselves warm, the guard-boat anchoring also. When the ebb tide made, the brigade returned, the Constellation's boat quitting them only when they had got below the frigate.

Shortly after, the fortifications being sufficiently advanced, and block ships being ready for sinking in the channel, the Constellation was carried up again to a place of security. About this time Capt. Stewart was transferred to the command of the Constitution, 44, and Capt. Tarbell received a temporary appointment to the Constellation, though, the enemy always maintaining

* As Mr. Neale pulled off, he fired a musket at the enemy, and it is said the ball passed through the jacket of an officer of high rank. This gentleman kept so close to the enemy that he overheard their conversation, which was repeated to them, by the next flag that went down. The English officers confessed that the vigilance of the ship was too much for them, insisting that Capt. Stewart must be a *Scotchman*, he was so actively awake. "If the Constellation were a Frenchman, we should have had her long ago," observed an officer of very high rank, on that occasion. This might have been so, or not, for the French understand defending a ship at anchor, as well as most nations.

a strong force in the waters of the Chesapeake, the ship continued to be blockaded until the peace.

The Chesapeake, lying at Boston, had less difficulty in getting to sea, for the enemy did not keep any force before that port, during the first few months of the war; most probably under the false impression that such was the disaffection of the eastern states, that it would virtually be annoying friends. She sailed, at the close of February 1813, under the orders of Capt. Evans, and passing by the Canary Isles and the Cape de Verds, she crossed the equator, and remained for six weeks near the line. She then made the coast of South America, passed the spot where the Hornet sunk the Peacock, the day after that action had occurred, and went through the West Indies, and along the American coast, to the port from which she had sailed. During this long run, Capt. Evans saw but three men-of-war, a ship of the line and a frigate, near the Western Islands, and a sloop of war, off the Capes of Virginia. The latter escaped in the night, after a chase of two days. The Chesapeake captured four merchant vessels.

This cruise, during which the frigate had been taken, without success, over a part of the ocean much frequented by British cruisers, went far towards confirming the character of being an unlucky ship, that the Chesapeake had always possessed, and neither officers nor sailors were fond of serving in her; for, whatever reason may teach men on such subjects, facts and superstition are usually found to furnish more arguments

than logic and common sense*. In entering the harbour, the Chesapeake lost a top-mast, and several men, who were aloft at the time, were drowned. Capt. Evans gave up the command of the ship on his return, on account of his health†, and was succeeded by Capt. James Lawrence.

By this time, the enemy had changed his policy as regards the eastern states, and he kept a few frigates in the vicinity of Massachusetts Bay, with a view to intercept the American ships of war that passed in and out. Two of these cruisers, the Shannon, 38, and Tenedos, 38, had been off Boston, it was said, in waiting for the President, 44, and Congress, 38, to come out, but these two ships had sailed without encountering them, and it was by no means probable that the English seriously wished a meeting. When it was understood, however, that the Chesapeake was ready to sail, the Shannon, Capt. Broke, appeared alone in the offing, and, as the ships were very fairly matched, a combat appeared

* In the navy, at this particular juncture, the Constitution, Constellation, and Enterprise, were the *lucky* vessels of the service, and the Chesapeake and President the unlucky. The different vessels named, went into the war of 1812 with these characters, and they were singularly confirmed by circumstances. Even the fact that the Constellation remained blockaded throughout the war, scarcely, impaired her character, for it was remarked that the enemy could never get hold of her, and, usually, her officers and men, when brought into action, as occurred in several instances, in boats and at batteries were successful.

† Capt. Evans had lost the sight of one of his eyes, and that of the other was in great danger.

much more probable. It is now known that Capt. Broke had sent in an invitation to Capt. Lawrence, to meet him in any latitude and longitude that might be agreed on; but, unfortunately, his letter did not arrive until the Chesapeake had gone out, and the advantage of having officers and men accustomed to act a little together, was lost. The Chesapeake's contemplated cruise was to the northward and eastward, with a view to intercept the store-ships and troop-ships that were steering for the St. Lawrence. The Hornet, 18, Capt. Biddle, had been put under the orders of Capt. Lawrence, and it was intended that the two ships should cruise in company*. The Greenland whale-

* In the following letter, the reader will discover the reluctance with which Lawrence sailed in the Chesapeake, besides getting a better idea of the contemplated cruise. It will be seen that the latter resembled the cruise of Paul Jones and of the elder Biddle, in the war of the Revolution. In this letter, however, Capt. Lawrence does not go beyond the expected place of meeting of the two ships.

"BOSTON, May 27th, 1813.

"Dear Sir:

"In hopes of being relieved by Capt. Stewart, I neglected writing agreeably to promise, but as I have given over all hopes of seeing him, and the Chesapeake is almost ready, I shall sail on Sunday, provided I have a chance of getting out clear of the Shannon and Tenedos, who are on the look-out. My intention is to pass out by Cape Sable, then run out west (east), until I get into the stream, then haul in for Cape Canso, and run for Cape Breton, where I expect the pleasure of seeing you; I think your best chance of getting out is through the Sound.

"In haste, your's sincerely,

"Capt. BIDDLE. "J. LAWRENCE."

fishery, however, was the ultimate object of these vessels.

In the forenoon of June the 1st, 1813, the Shannon appeared in the bay, probably in the expectation of receiving an answer to the letter that Captain Broke had sent in. At this time, the Chesapeake was lying in President Roads, ready for sea; though some disaffection existed among the crew, on account of the prize-money of the last cruise, which was still unpaid. The ship had an unusual number of mercenaries in her; and among others, was a boatswain's mate, a Portuguese, who was found to be particularly troublesome. Under the extraordinary circumstances in which the vessel was placed, it was thought prudent to temporize, and the people were addressed, and some promises were made to them, that had the apparent effect to put them in a better humour.

At twelve, meridian, the Chesapeake lifted her anchor, and stood out into the bay, with a pleasant breeze from the southward and westward. As the Shannon was then in plain sight, the ship was cleared for action, and the best appearances were assumed, although it is known that Captain Lawrence went into this engagement with strong reluctance, on account of the peculiar state of his crew. He had himself joined the vessel not long before; her proper first lieutenant, Mr. B. Page, of Virginia, an officer of experience, was ill on shore, and died soon after, in Boston; the acting first lieutenant, Mr. Augustus Ludlow, of New York, though an officer of merit, was a very young man, and

was in an entirely novel situation; and there was but one other commissioned sea-officer in the ship, two of the midshipmen acting as third and fourth lieutenants, and now performing this duty for the first time. One, if not both of these young gentlemen, had also just joined the ship, following their captain from the Hornet. In addition, the Chesapeake had an unusual number of landsmen in her. Notwithstanding all these sinister circumstances, the history of naval warfare does not contain an instance of a ship's being more gallantly conducted, than the Chesapeake was now handled.

The Shannon stood off under easy sail, when Captain Lawrence fired a gun, about half-past four, which induced her to heave-to, with her head to the southward and eastward. By this time the wind had freshened, and at five, the Chesapeake took in her royals and top-gallant sails, and half-an-hour later, she hauled up her courses. The two ships were now about thirty miles from the light, the Shannon under single-reefed topsails and jib, and the Chesapeake under her whole topsails and jib, coming down fast. As the Shannon was running with the wind a little free, there was an anxious moment on board of her, during which it was uncertain on which side the Chesapeake was about to close, or whether she might not be disposed to commence the action on her quarter. But Captain Lawrence chose to lay his enemy fairly alongside, yard-arm and yard-arm, and he luffed, and ranged up a-beam, on the Shannon's starboard side.

When the Chesapeake's foremast was in a line with the Shannon's mizen-mast, the latter ship discharged her cabin guns, and the others in succession, from aft, forward. The Chesapeake did not fire until all her guns bore, when she delivered as destructive a broadside as probably ever came out of a ship of her force. For six or eight minutes the cannonading was fierce, and the best of the action is said to have been with the American frigate, so far as the general effect of the fire was concerned, though it was much in favour of the enemy, in its particular and accidental consequences. While passing the Shannon's broadside, the Chesapeake had her fore-topsail tie and jib sheet shot away. Her spanker brails also were loosened, and the sail blew out. These accidents occurring nearly at the same instant, they brought the ship up into the wind, when taking a-back, she got stern way, and fell aboard of the enemy, with her mizen-rigging foul of the Shannon's fore-chains. By some accounts, the fluke of an anchor on board the Shannon hooked in the rigging of the Chesapeake. Whatever may have served to keep the ships together, it appears to be certain, that the American frigate lay exposed to a raking fire from the enemy, who poured into her the contents of one or two carronades, that nearly swept her upper deck. At the few first discharges of the Shannon, Captain Lawrence had received a wound in the leg; Mr. Broom, the marine officer, Mr. Ballard, the acting fourth lieutenant, and the boatswain, were mortally wounded; Mr. White, the master, was

killed, and Mr. Ludlow, the first lieutenant, was twice wounded by grape and musketry. Such was the state of the upper deck, as the accidents mentioned brought the vessels in contact. When Captain Lâwrence perceived that the ships were likely to fall foul of each other, he directed the boarders to be called, but unfortunately, a bugleman had been substituted for the drummer in giving the signal, and this man, a negro, was so much alarmed at the effects of the conflict, that he had concealed himself under the stern of the launch; when found, he was completely paralyzed by fear, and was totally unable to sound a note. Verbal orders were consequently sent below, by the captain's aids, for the boarders to come on deck. At this critical moment, Captain Lawrence fell with a ball through the body.

The upper deck was now left without an officer on it above the rank of a midshipman. It was the practice of the service, in that day, to keep the arms of the boarders on the quarter-deck, and about the masts; and even when the boarders had been summoned in the slow and imperfect manner that was allowed by the voice, in the confusion of a combat, they were without arms; for, by this time, the enemy was in possession of the Chesapeake's quarter-deck.

As soon as the ships were foul, Capt. Broke passed forward in the Shannon, and, to use his own language, "seeing that the enemy were flinching from his guns," he gave the order to board. Finding that all their officers had fallen, and exposed to a raking fire, with-

out the means of returning a shot, the men on the Chesapeake's quarter-deck had indeed left their guns. The marines had suffered severely, and having lost their officer, were undecided what to do, and the entire upper deck was virtually without any defence.

When the enemy entered the ship, from his fore-channels, it was with great caution, and so slowly, that twenty resolute men would have repulsed him. The boarders had not yet appeared from below, and meeting with no resistance, he began to move forward. This critical moment lost the ship; for the English, encouraged by the state of the Chesapeake's upper deck, now rushed forward in numbers, and soon had entire command above board. The remaining officers appeared on deck, and endeavoured to make a rally, but it was altogether too late, for the boatswain's mate mentioned, had removed the gratings of the berth-deck, and had run below, followed by a great many men*. Soon after, the Chesapeake's colours were hauled down by the enemy, who got complete possession of the ship, with very little resistance.

Capt. Broke, in his official report of this action, observes that after he had boarded, "the enemy fought "desperately, but in disorder." The first part of this statement is probably true, as regards a few gallant individuals on the upper deck, but there was no regular resistance to the boarders of the Shannon at all. The people of the Chesapeake had not the means to

* As this man performed this act of treachery, he is said to have cried out, "so much for not having paid men their prize-money."

resist, neither were they collected, nor commanded in the mode in which they had been trained to act. The enemy fired down the hatches, and killed and wounded a great many men in this manner, but it does not appear that their fire was returned. Although the English lost a few men when they boarded, it is understood that the slaughter was principally on the side of the Americans, as might be expected, after the assault was made*.

Few naval battles have been more sanguinary than this. It lasted altogether not more than 15 minutes, and yet both ships were charnel houses. The Chesapeake had 48 men killed, and 98 wounded, a large proportion of whom fell by the raking fire of the Shannon, after the Chesapeake was taken aback, and by the fire of the boarders. The Shannon had 23 killed and 56 wounded, principally by the Chesapeake's broadsides. It was impossible for ships of that size to approach so near, in tolerably smooth water, and to fire with so much steadiness, without committing great havock. On board the Chesapeake fell, or died of their wounds shortly after the combat, Capt. Lawrence, Lieuts. Ludlow, Ballard, and Broom (of the marines);

* The fact, that the English met with no resistance in coming on board the Chesapeake, is fully confirmed by the official account of Capt. Broke. This officer, who appears to have behaved with great personal gallantry, was among the first to board, and he says, "having received a sabre wound, *at the first onset*, while charging a part of the enemy, who had rallied *on their forecastle*," &c. &c. The enemy came in *astern*, and the *first onset* occurring on the *forecastle*, it follows that there was no resistance aft.

Mr. White, the master, Mr Adams, the boatswain, and three midshipmen. All but the midshipmen, fell before the enemy boarded. Mr. Budd second, and Mr. Cox third lieutenant, were wounded after the enemy had got on the Chesapeake's decks. Several midshipmen were also wounded. The Shannon lost her first lieutenant, and one or two inferior officers, and Capt. Broke was badly wounded; the boatswain lost an arm, and one midshipman was wounded, mostly after the boarding.

As soon as the ships were clear of each other, they both made sail for Halifax, where they soon after arrived. Capt. Lawrence died of his wounds on the 6th of June, and with Mr. Ludlow, was buried by the enemy with military honours*.

* James Lawrence was born at Burlington, New Jersey, Oct. 1, 1781. His father was a respectable lawyer, and it was first intended to educate the son to the same profession, but preferring the sea, he received a midshipman's warrant on the 4th of Sept. 1798. His first service was in the Ganges, 24, Capt. Tingey. So much aptitude did he show for the profession, that Mr. Lawrence was made an acting lieutenant, by his commander, within two years after he went to sea, though he did not receive a commission until 1802. He was first lieutenant in the Enterprise from 1802 to 1804, and distinguished himself in the attack on the feluccas at old Tripoli, in May 1802, under Mr. Porter. In February 1804, he accompanied his commander Lieut. Com. Decatur, and the Enterprise's ship's company, in the attack on the Philadelphia, on which occasion he was the second in command, among the party that went in. In 1805 he crossed the ocean twice in a gun-boat, and in 1808 he was made first lieutenant of the Constitution.

Mr. Lawrence enjoyed a high reputation in the service, for in

Perhaps the capture of no single ship ever produced so much exultation on the side of the victors, or so

addition to his professinal attainments, as Decatur had expressed himself of his character, there was "no more dodge about him than to the main-mast." . In 1809 he got command of the Vixen, 14, and shortly after of the Wasp, 18. Being still a lieutenant, this last command he was compelled to relinquish to Capt. Jones, exchanging his ship for the Argus, 16. In 1811 he was promoted, when he got the Hornet, 18. In this vessel he was serving at the commencement of the war, and in her he captured the Peacock, 18. His next command was the Chesapeake, 38, after he was made a captain, in which ship he fell, dying of his wounds, June 6th, 1813, in the 32nd year of his age.

Capt. Lawrence married a lady of New York, in 1809, while in command of the Vixen, by whom he had several children, only one of whom, a daughter, survives.

James Lawrence was a man of noble stature, and fine personal appearance. He had the air and manners of a gentleman-like sailor, and was much beloved by his friends. He was quick and impetuous in feelings, and sometimes manifested it on the quarter-deck, but, in all critical situations, his coolness was remarkable. He was a perfect man-of-war's man, and an excellent quarter-deck seaman, handling his vessel not only skilfully, but with all the style of the profession. In his feelings and sentiments he was chivalrous, generous, and just. All his younger officers became singularly attached to him. Indeed, his interest in the midshipmen was proverbial, and, on one occasion, when the midshipmen of a squadron gave a dinner to Com. Rodgers, for some reason, it was proposed not to ask any lieutenant. "What, not Mr. Lawrence!" cried one. Mr. Lawrence was excepted by acclamation, and was, in fact, the only lieutenant present. His humanity and kindness of heart were as conspicuous as his courage, and he was never known to say rude things to his inferiors; for while his manner had all a seaman's frankness, and sometimes a superior's impatience, it was tempered by the qualities of a gentleman. His

much depression on that of the beaten party, as that of the Chesapeake. The American nation had fallen into the error of their enemy, and had begun to imagine themselves invincible on the ocean, and this without any better reason than having been successful in a few detached combats, and its mortification was in proportion to the magnitude of its delusion; while England hailed the success of the Shannon as a proof that its ancient renown was about to be regained. It has always been a prevalent illusion among the people of Great Britain to believe themselves superior to most other nations in pure personal prowess, and the Chesapeake having been taken by boarding, this peculiar disposition was flattered with the impression that they had prevailed in a hand to hand conflict, and that their seamen had only to go on board the American ships in future, in order to be triumphant. This error, in the end, lost them several vessels, for a more hazardous experiment cannot well be made, than to attempt

eyes filled with tears while inflicting necessary punishment, nor was it common to find another who had so strong a reluctance to use his authority in this mode, as himself.

There is little doubt that Lawrence fought the Chesapeake contrary to his own judgment. His challenge to the Bonne Cityonne was an additional reason for his going out, under the circumstances; and it furnishes proof, in itself, of the inexpediency of using those means of bringing on an engagement. His deportment during the battle in which he fell, was noble and inspiriting, and the loss of the ship may be imputed to his death. Even his enemies eulogized the manner in which he carried his vessel into action, and his dying words were "never strike the flag of my ship."

carrying a ship of any force by boarding, before she has been virtually beaten with the guns. It is scarcely exceeding the truth, to say that such a circumstance never occurred. In the ancient navies of Europe, in which men obtained commissions on account of their birth, and captains have been often known to allow their inferiors to give orders in the heat of a combat, any thing may happen, for a ship without a commander is like a man without a soul; but no experienced seaman will ever expose his people, unnecessarily in this manner, against an enemy that he feels to be prepared to receive him.

In America, reflection soon caused the mortification in a great measure to subside, as it was seen that the capture of the Chesapeake was owing to a concurrence of circumstances that was not likely to again happen. It was soon understood that the closeness and short duration of this combat were actually owing to their own officer, who brought his ship so near that the battle was necessarily soon decided, while its succeeding incidents were altogether the results of the chances of war. At the moment when the English boarded, the total loss of the Shannon in men, is believed to have been at least equal to that of the Chesapeake, and yet the former vessel was deprived of the services of no important officer but the boatswain, while the Chesapeake had lost those of her captain, two of her lieutenants, master, marine officer, and boatswain, including every one in any authority on the upper deck. These fortuitous events are as unconnected with

any particular merit on the one side, as they are with any particular demerit on the other; and the feeling of the public gradually settled down into a sentiment of sincere respect for the high-spirited Lawrence, and of deep regret for his loss. When told of their defeat, and called on to acknowledge that their enemy was victorious in one of the most extraordinary combats of the age, they have generally given all the credit to the conquerors that they deserved; and while they frankly admit that the victory was remarkable, they may be excused for believing it quite as much so for standing alone in such a war, as for any other distinguishing characteristic.

CHAPTER XVII.

Capture of the Vixen—Capture of the Siren—Action between the Enterprise and Boxer—The Enterprise and Mars—Chase of the Enterprise—Capture of the Rattlesnake.

WHILE these different events were occurring among the frigates and larger sloops of war, the lighter cruisers of the navy had not been idle. The fate of the Nautilus has been already mentioned; the Argus's cruises have also been alluded too; but nothing has been said of the Siren, Enterprise, and Vixen, the other three little vessels, which were so distinguished in the Tripolitan contest. The latter, like her sister the Nautilus, had but a short career after the declaration of war. During the first few months, she was on the southern coast, under the command of Capt. Gadsden, but that officer dying, she was given to Capt. Washington Reed, who went on a cruise among the islands. A few days out, he was fallen in with and chased by the Southampton, 32, Capt. Sir James Lucas Yeo, which ship succeeded in getting alongside of the Vixen, after a short but severe trial of speed, and of course captured her. Both vessels were soon after

wrecked on one of the Bahama Islands, when, it is said, that the American crew set an example of subordination, sobriety, and order, that produced a strong impression on the British officers*.

The Siren cruised a short time in the Gulf of Mexico, without meeting with any thing, under Lieut. Com. Joseph Bainbridge, and then came north, going into Boston. Here Mr. Bainbridge, who had been promoted, was transferred to the Frolic, one of the new sloops built under the late laws; and Mr. George Parker, who had been the first lieutenant of the Constitution, in her action with the Java, having been promoted, was attached to the brig in his place. The future history of this little cruiser being brief, it may be given here. She sailed from Boston in the summer of 1814, and, shortly after she got to sea, Capt. Parker†

* Shortly after, and before he could be exchanged, Capt. Reed, who enjoyed a high reputation for spirit and conduct in the service, died of yellow fever. He had been Somers's first lieutenant.

† The professional history of Capt. Parker was a little singular. He was of a respectable family in Virginia, and entered the navy young. He had risen to the rank of lieutenant, or acting lieutenant, when, taking offence at something in the deportment of a tradesman who came on board the ship to which he belonged, which was lying at Washington at the time, he followed the man on shore and chastised him. The man is said to have presented himself to Mr. Jefferson, in the plight in which he had been left, and Mr. Parker was dismissed from the navy without trial. This occurred in 1804. Determined not to be driven from his profession, Mr. Parker entered as a master's mate, and not long after rose to be a master. In 1807, he received the commission of a lieutenant, and in 1813, that of a master and commander. He was a brave and spirited officer, and bade fair to rise in the service, when he died.

died, when Lieut. N. Nicholson succeeded to the command. On the 12th of July, the Siren fell in with the Medway, 74, Capt. Brine, and, after a vigorous chase of eleven hours, during which the brig threw her guns overboard, she was captured, and taken into the Cape of Good Hope.

The fortune of the Enterprise was better, her character for good luck having been singularly maintained, and this, too, under very unfavourable circumstances, throughout the whole of the war. Her first commander was Mr. Johnston Blakely, who kept her on the eastern coast, where she was of great service, in driving off the small privateers that were sent out of the adjacent English ports. In August, she captured the Fly privateer, and soon after, Mr. Blakely, having risen to the rank of master and commander, was given the command of a new sloop called the Wasp. His successor in the Enterprise was Mr. William Burrows. The service of the vessel, under this officer, was not changed, but she was still kept to watch the enemy's privateers, between Cape Ann and the Bay of Fundy.

The Enterprise left Portsmouth, N. H., on the 1st of September, 1813, and steering to the eastward, was led into Portland, in chase of a schooner, on the 3rd. On the 4th, she swept out to sea again, and pursued her course to the eastward, in quest of several privateers that were reported to be off Manhagan. While opening the bay, near Penguin Point, a brig was seen getting under way, that had every appearance of being

a vessel of war. The character of the stranger was soon put out of all doubt, by her setting four British ensigns, firing several guns, which are since known to have been signals of recall to a boat that had gone to the shore, and her making sail to close with the Enterprise. Being satisfied that he had an enemy and a vessel of war to deal with, Lieut. Com. Burrows hauled up, in order to clear the land. At 3 p. m., believing himself far enough from the shore, he shortened sail, and edged away towards the enemy. The brigs closed within half pistol-shot, at twenty minutes past three, when both vessels opened their fire nearly at the same instant. As the wind was light, and there was little sea on, the cannonade, particularly on the side of the Enterprise, was very destructive; and, by a singular coincidence, both commanders fell, almost at the same moment. The American passed a-head, and manœuvred on the bows of the enemy, to advantage, for some little time; though the contest was mainly decided by gunnery.

About four, the fire of the enemy ceased, though her colours were flying. She now hailed, to say she had struck; and when ordered to haul down her ensign, an answer was given that it had been nailed aloft, and could not be lowered until the fire of the Enterprise should be stopped. After this awkward explanation, the Enterprise ceased firing, and took possession. The prize proved to be the Boxer, 14, Capt. Blythe, an officer of merit, who had been cut nearly in

two by an eighteen-pound shot. The loss of the Boxer in killed has never been accurately ascertained, though it is thought to have been relatively heavy. She had fourteen men wounded. The Enterprise had one man killed, and thirteen wounded, of whom three subsequently died. Although the disparity in the casualties of this action was not so striking as in some of the previous engagements, that in the injuries received by the two vessels was very great. But one eighteen-pound shot hulled the Enterprise; one passed through her mainmast, and another through her foremast. She was much cut up aloft, particularly by grape; and a great many shot of the latter description had struck her hull. Nearly all of the casualties were received from grape or cannister shot. On the other hand, the Boxer had been repeatedly hulled, had no less than three eighteen-pound shot through her foremast alone, several of her guns were dismounted, her top-gallant forecastle was nearly cut away, and her sails, spars, and rigging, generally, were much torn to pieces. As the water was smooth, neither vessel was dismasted. The Enterprise returned to Portland on the 7th, with the Boxer, where Lieut. Com. Burrows *,

* Mr. Burrows was a son of Lieut. Col. Burrows, at an earlier day the commandant of the marine corps. He entered the navy, January 4th, 1800, and, though a man of great singularity of temperament, was generally much beloved in the service. He took the Enterprise into action in very gallant style, and, after receiving his wound, refused to be carried below, until the Boxer had struck. Mr. Burrows was killed by the accidental position of a limb. While en-

and Capt. Blythe, were both buried with the honours of war.

This little success was the first that had fallen to the share of the American navy since the loss of the Chesapeake; and it had a great influence in restoring the confidence of the nation, which, no longer expecting impossibilities, began to be satisfied with victory. The vessels were of the same class, and, though the Enterprise was the longest on deck, there was no material difference in the tonnage. The American vessel carried two guns the most; her armament, as well as that of all the other small vessels, having been increased since the Tripolitan war. When the Enterprise first cruised in the West Indies, her armament consisted of 12 sixes. After she was repaired, or rather rebuilt, at Trieste, 14 sixes were put in her; and subsequently, when altered into a brig, by crowding the ports, she carried 14 eighteen-pound carronades and two long chase guns. She probably had, also, a few more men than the Boxer, though precisely what number cannot be ascertained, as the latter brig is said to have had some supernumeraries in her. Both brigs were gallantly fought, and it is admitted that the Boxer was not given up too soon.

couraging his men, he laid hold of a gun-tackle fall, to help the crew of a carronade that had lost some people, to run out the gun, and in doing so, raised one leg against the bulwark to aid the effort. At this moment, a shot, supposed to be a cannister, struck his thigh, and glanced from the bone into his body, inflicting a fearfully painful wound, which he bore with a fortitude that equalled his courage. He was unmarried, and died in his 28th year.

When Mr. Burrows fell, the command of the Enterprise devolved on Lieut. E. B. M'Call, who brought both brigs into port*.

After the death of Mr. Burrows, Mr. James Renshaw was appointed to the command of the Enterprise, under which officer, during the following winter, she made a cruise to the southward, as far as the West Indies. Here her usual good fortune accompanied her; for though she sailed badly, and was three times hard chased, she always escaped. The Rattlesnake, 16, a fast-sailing brig, bought into the service, was in company, under the orders of Lieut. Com. Creighton, who was the senior officer of the two vessels. Mr. Creighton went on cruising ground much frequented by the enemy, and yet fell in with no man-of-war he could

* There is little doubt that Capt. Blythe engaged with strong expectations of capturing the Enterprise. He knew of her being near him, and probably knew her when he got under way. It is impossible he should not also have known her force. His people came into action in high spirits; and the colours were nailed to the mast by his orders. When the Enterprise hailed, to know if the Boxer had struck, one of the officers of the latter sprang on a gun, shook both fists at the Americans, and cried out, "No—no—no," with the addition of some pretty strong terms of opprobrium. So powerful was this gentleman's excitement, that his superior had to order him down, lest he might be the means of drawing a fire on the vessel. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the officers and men of the Enterprise laughed at this ludicrous scene, which was rendered so much the more piquant by the process of lowering colours that had been nailed aloft. These expedients may produce good, with particular crews, and in peculiar circumstances; but, as rules, challenges should not be given, nor colours nailed to the mast.

engage. He was chased by heavy ships, and, to use his own expression, "in every instance, the good fortune of the Enterprise has been wonderfully manifest." The Rattlesnake outsailed her consort with so much ease, that most of the cruise she was under her topsails.

While off the coast of Florida, the Enterprise got alongside of the Mars, 14, a British privateer, with a crew of 75 men. When the two brigs appeared, near half the people of the Mars took to the boats and went ashore, to escape impressment; but her master, notwithstanding this reduction of his force, ranged up under the broadside of the Enterprise, with his tompions out and guns trained. Lieut. Renshaw being ignorant of the strength of the crew of the Mars, fired into her, when she struck, having had 4 men killed and wounded. On the 25th of April, the brigs separated, while chased by a frigate. The enemy pursued the Enterprise, and for 70 hours pressed her very hard. Lieut. Com. Renshaw was compelled to throw all his guns but one overboard, and yet the enemy frequently got within the range of shot. On the morning of the 27th it was perfectly calm, and the frigate, then at long gun-shot, began to hoist out her boats, when a light breeze sprang up, and brought this lucky little brig again dead to windward. Nothing but this favourable shift of wind saved the Enterprise from capture.

Shortly after, Mr. Creighton was promoted, and appointed to the command of a new sloop of war just

launched at Washington, and Mr. Renshaw was transferred to the Rattlesnake. The two vessels being in a southern port, the Enterprise was sent to Charleston, where she became the guard vessel, her sailing being too indifferent to allow of her being sent to sea again, in such a war. When cruising in the Rattlesnake, in lat. 40° N., long. 33° W., Lieut. Com. Renshaw was chased by a frigate, and compelled to throw overboard all his armament, but the two long guns. By this means he escaped. June 22nd, near the same spot, however, he fell in with the Leander, 50, a new ship, constructed on the most approved modern plan, which vessel captured him, the Rattlesnake having been unfortunately placed between an enemy that had the advantage of the wind and the land. On this occasion, Lieut. Com. Renshaw kept his colours flying in a very steady and officer-like manner, until the Leander threw her shot into the Rattlesnake with precision and effect.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Construction of new sloops of war—Cruise of the Argus—The Argus and Pelican—Luck of the Enterprise.

In addition to the law of January 2d, 1813, which authorised the construction of the four ships of the line and six heavy frigates, it will be remembered that the executive was also empowered to cause several sloops of war to be laid down. These ships were of the class of the Hornet and Wasp, but were a little larger than the old vessels of the same rate; and they all mounted twenty thirty-two-pound carronades, besides the two bow guns. Most of them were got into the water in the course of the year 1813, though their preparations were in different degrees of forwardness. They were called the Wasp, the Frolic, the Peacock, the Erie, the Ontario, and the Argus. As there had been a brig in the navy of the latter name, however, with which the reader has long been acquainted, it is now necessary to allude to her fate.

After the return of the Argus from her cruise under

Lieutenant Com. Sinclair, as has been already stated, Mr. William Henry Allen, who had been the first lieutenant of the United States forty-four, in her action with the Macedonian, was appointed to command her. Lieutenant Allen first obtained the Argus, by an order from Com. Decatur; and there was a moment when it was uncertain whether Captain Biddle, or this gentleman, should go to sea in the brig, but the former was put into the Hornet. Mr. Allen was shortly after promoted, when his new station was confirmed by the department. June 18, 1813, the Argus sailed from New York, with Mr. Crawford, then recently appointed minister to France, on board; and after a passage of twenty-three days, she arrived safe at l'Orient. Remaining but three days in port, Captain Allen proceeded on a cruise.

The Argus sailed from l'Orient about the middle of July, and her exploits for the next few weeks revive the recollections of those of Captains Jones, Wickes, and Conyngham, during the Revolution. Captain Allen kept his brig some of the time in the chops of the English channel, then went round the Land's End, and shifted his cruising ground to the Irish channel. He captured twenty sail of merchantmen, while passing, as it might be, through the very centre of the enemy, most of which were destroyed. The appearance of this cruiser so near the British coast excited much interest in the English commercial world, and several cruisers were immediately sent in chase of her.

It will readily be understood, that the duty on board the Argus was of the most harassing and fatiguing nature, the feelings of Captain Allen inducing him to allow the masters and passengers of the different

vessels he took to remove every thing of value that belonged to themselves, before he caused the prizes to be burned. Indeed, in so honourable and chivalrous a spirit did this excellent officer conduct the peculiar warfare in which he was engaged, that even the enemy did ample justice to his liberality.

On the night of the 13th of August, the Argus fell in with a vessel from Oporto, loaded with wine. It has been said, and apparently on authority entitled to credit, that a good deal of the liquor was brought on board the brig, clandestinely, as the boats passed to and fro, and that many of the people, who had been over-worked and kept from their rest, partook of the refreshment it afforded too freely. A little before daylight, the prize was set on fire, when the Argus left her, under easy sail. Shortly after, a large brig-of-war was seen standing down upon the American vessel, under a cloud of canvass; and finding it impossible to gain the wind of his enemy, Captain Allen shortened sail to allow him to close. At six, the Argus wore, and fired her larboard broadside, the English vessel being then within good grape and canister range. The fire was immediately returned, the brigs fast drawing nearer. Within four minutes after the commencement of the action, Captain Allen was mortally wounded, by a round shot carrying off a leg. He refused to be taken below, but fainting from loss of blood, he was carried off the deck at eight minutes past six. At twelve minutes past six, Mr. Watson, the first lieutenant, was severely wounded in the head by a grape-shot, which stunned him, and he also was taken below. But one lieutenant remained, Mr. W. H. Allen, who continued to fight the brig in a very gallant manner, under the most discourag-

ing circumstances. At this juncture, the Argus was beautifully handled by the young officer in command; an attempt of the enemy to cross her stern, by keeping away, having been frustrated by the American brig's luffing into the wind, making a half-board, and throwing in a completely raking broadside herself. But all the braces aft having been shot away, the Argus broke round off, in filling again, when the enemy succeeded in crossing her stern and raking. At twenty-five minutes past six, the wheel-ropes and nearly all the running rigging being gone, the Argus became unmanageable, and the enemy chose his position at pleasure. At half-past six, Mr. Watson returned to the deck, when he found the enemy lying under the Argus's stern, pouring in his fire without resistance. An attempt was made to get alongside, with a view to board, but it was found impracticable to move the American brig, while the enemy kept on her quarter, or bow, throwing in a cross or raking fire with impunity, the Argus seldom being able to bring a gun to bear. At forty-seven minutes past six the colours were ordered to be hauled down; the enemy, at the same moment, falling on board, and taking possession over the bow.

The English brig was the Pelican eighteen, Captain Maples, mounting sixteen thirty-two pound carronades, four long guns, and one twelve pound carronade. The armament of the Argus, by crowding guns into the bridle ports, was eighteen twenty-four pound carronades and two chase guns. The enemy was so much heavier, that it may be doubted whether the Argus could have captured her antagonist under any ordinary circumstances; but it has been usual, in the service, to impute this defeat to a want

of officers, and to the fact that the people of the Argus were not in a fit condition to go into action. The American vessel was particularly well officered, so far as quality was concerned, though her batteries were necessarily left without a proper supervision, after Mr. Watson was taken below. It is not easy to believe that Captain Allen would have engaged with his people under any very obvious influence from a free use of wine, but nothing is more probable than that the crew of the Argus should have been overworked, in the peculiar situation in which they were placed; and they may have been exposed to the particular influence mentioned, without the circumstances having come to the knowledge of the superior officers. They have, indeed, been described as "nodding at their guns," from excessive fatigue. One thing would seem to be certain, that, while the brig was beautifully handled, so long as she was at all manageable, the fire of no other American cruiser, in this war, was as little destructive as that of the Argus. This has been attributed to the fatigue of the crew, and it is reasonable to suppose that the circumstance of the two lieutenants having been so early taken from the batteries, did not contribute to the accuracy of the fire. It ought, moreover, to be added, that the Pelican was about a fourth larger than her antagonist.

On the other hand, the fire of the enemy, when its length, closeness, and want of resistance, are considered, does not appear to have been remarkable. The Argus had two midshipmen and four men killed, and seventeen wounded, in an action of three quarters of an hour. The Pelican, notwithstanding, was extremely well managed, and was very gallantly fought. She lost seven men in killed and wounded, but

appears to have suffered very little in her ull, or even aloft.

Captain Allen * died of his wound in the hospital of Mill Prison, and was buried by the enemy with the honours of war. Mr. Watson recovered of his hurts.

Thus the navy lost all but the Enterprise, of the five little cruisers that had figured before Tripoli, and which had become endeared to the service by its

* William Henry Allen was born at Providence, Rhode Island, October 21, 1784. His father had been an officer of the Revolution, and his mother was the sister of one of the governors of the state. He entered the navy April 28th, 1800, or in his sixteenth year, and his first cruise was in the George Washington, Captain Bainbridge; his second in the Philadelphia, Captain S. Barron; his third in the John Adams, Captain Rodgers. He was made an acting lieutenant into the Constitution, Com. Rodgers, in 1805. He was one of the Chesapeake's lieutenants in 1807, and the only gun that was fired at the Leopard was touched off by Mr. Allen, by means of a coal held in his fingers. He remained in the Chesapeake after Captain Decatur took her, and he followed that officer to the United States, forty-four, as her first lieutenant. In this latter capacity he was serving when the Macedonian was taken. On that occasion Mr. Allen obtained great credit, as the executive officer of the ship, and the manner in which he repaired the damages of the prize has been esteemed highly seaman-like and beautiful. His promotion, appointment to the Argus, and death, appear in the text.

Captain Allen was esteemed one of the best officers of his class in the navy. A thorough man-of-war's man, he was of mild and gentleman-like deportment, a fine, martial, personal appearance, and of respectable mental attainments. His influence over the crews with which he sailed was very great, and it is not possible to say now what might have been the result of the combat in which he fell, had he not been so early killed. He was unmarried.

The two lieutenants of the Argus, though young in service, were both men of great merit. Mr. Watson died, while serving on the West India station, a few years later, and left an unusually high name for his gentlemanly and personal qualities, while the junior lieutenant, who bore the same name as Captain Allen, without being a relative, was killed in battle with pirates, leaving as high a professional and private character behind him, as any man of his age, who ever died in the service. He was an officer of great ingenuity, respectable attainments, proved courage, and high principles.

traditions and recollections. The Argus alone had been taken under circumstances that allowed not a gun to be fired. Those who remembered the time when Stewart, Somers, Decatur, Hull, and Smith, bold and ambitious young seamen, commanded these vessels, in a warfare conducted in a distant sea, attached an importance to their loss that was altogether disproportioned to their intrinsic value; and it did not fail to excite remark, that the Enterprise alone, whose good fortune had already been so conspicuous, should continue to cruise, with impunity, in the very centre of the enemy's force, while her four consorts had fallen one by one.*

* The *luck* of the Enterprise will be more apparent, by a short summary of her services. In the French war, under Lieutenant Com. Shaw, she took more French privateers than any vessel in the West Indies, and her action with Le Flambleau was one of the warmest of the sort known. In the succeeding war she took the Tripoli, of equal force. She may be said to have burned the Philadelphia, as, with a very trifling exception, this duty was performed by her officers and men. She took the Boxer in the English war; and, notwithstanding she sailed very badly after she was rigged into a brig, the enemy never could catch her.

CHAPTER XIX.

English squadron in the Chesapeake—Attack by American gun-boats—Affair in James' River—The Scorpion and Asp—Capture of the Asp—New London blockaded—Attack on the Alligator—The Alligator sunk—Gallant exploit—Attack on a gun-boat—Warfare in the Delaware—Gun-boat action—Loss of small vessels—Large sloops of war.

SHORTLY after the commencement of the war, the enemy had sent Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren to command against the little navy of the republic, with Rear-Admiral Cockburn as the next in rank. Several two-decked ships appeared on the coast, and near a hundred British pennants were assembled in the American seas. A considerable force collected in the Chesapeake, a part of which was kept to watch the Constellation, in the manner mentioned, while the small vessels made descents on the coast, or entered the rivers and creeks, with which those waters abound, carrying on a species of warfare that had no other effect on the American nation, than to irritate the public mind, and which, as it regarded the enemy, could not have had a very beneficial influence on their tone, while it must have been repugnant to the feelings of most of those employed on duty, so much opposed to the ordinary habits of military men.

In the early part of June, 1813, the enemy was thought to have had more than twenty sail of cruisers in and about the Chesapeake, of which several were ships of the line. The flags of the two admirals were flying among them, and it was in their presence that the first of the three attempts on the Constellation, which have been already related, was made. On the 18th, three frigates came into Hampton Roads, and one of them went up nearly to the quarantine ground, sending her boats to destroy some small vessels in the James. The next day the flotilla of gun-boats descended to attack her, under the orders of Captain Tarbell, then temporarily in command of the Constellation. There were fifteen boats in all, acting in two divisions, one of which was directed by Lieutenant Gardner, and the other by Lieutenant Robert Henley. Officers and men were taken from the frigate to man them, including nearly all her lieutenants and midshipmen. A company of riflemen volunteered to join the seamen, who were also distributed among the boats. The weather prevented Captain Tarbell from approaching the enemy, until Sunday the 20th, when it fell calm, and the gun-boats dropped down within a good range for their shot, and opened on the upper frigate, about four A. M. At this time the two other frigates were still lying in the roads.

The gun-boats were formed in a crescent, and a brisk cannonade was commenced on the part of the Americans. It was some time before the enemy returned it, the approach in the dark and mist having taken him completely by surprise. The flotilla began the action at anchor, but it was soon found impossible to keep the boats steady, and most of them weighed and got out their sweeps, by means of which the guns

were kept bearing in the right direction. The defence of the frigate was very feeble, and after discharging two or three broadsides, she got under way, but the wind was too light to enable her either to close or to haul off. This vessel was in a very critical situation, and owed her escape in a great measure to her consorts; for, after a severe cannonade of more than an hour, one of the ships below was enabled to close, when a much sharper contest occurred. But the wind increasing, and the third ship drawing near, Captain Tarbell made a signal for the flotilla to retire.

In this affair, most of the boats were conducted with spirit. The fire was well directed, and they treated the upper ship quite roughly. The fire of this vessel was extremely feeble, and it appears to have done no execution whatever. That of the second ship, however, was very animated, and it was particularly well directed. Although the loss of the Americans in men was small, consisting of only one master's mate killed, and two men wounded, the enemy's grape flew around them in great numbers. One boat received a bad shot between wind and water, and several had their sweeps shot away, or were otherwise injured. The gun-boat commanded by Mr. Nantz, sailing master, was crippled, and in danger of being captured by the enemy, when, by order of Captain Tarbell, she was taken in tow by the boat commanded by Lieutenant W. B. Shubrick, of the Constellation, and brought off.

The frigate first engaged was thought to be the Narcissus thirty-two, and the vessel that came to her relief, the Junon thirty-eight, Captain Saunders. This experiment had the effect to convince most of the sea officers engaged on board the gun-boats, however, of

the bad qualities of that description of vessel, they having been very generally found wanting in a sufficient degree of steadiness to render their fire certain, even in smooth water. The recoil of the guns caused them to roll to a degree that rendered the aim uncertain, and it has been seen that they could only be kept in the proper positions by the aid of the sweeps.

The next flood, a large force of the enemy, consisting of fourteen sail, came into the Roads, and an attack was expected. On the 20th, the enemy's ships weighed, and ascended with the tide to the mouth of James' river, where, in the afternoon, they were seen making preparations to send up a large force in boats. As so much depended on the defence of the batteries of Craney Island, Captain Cassin, who commanded the naval force at Norfolk, sent three of the lieutenants of the Constellation, Messrs. Neale, W. Branford Shubrick, and Sanders, on shore, with one hundred seamen, to take charge of the principal guns. This party was sustained by Lieutenant Breckenridge, of the marines, and about fifty men of that gallant corps. Most of the officers of the navy then at Norfolk, and who did not belong to the frigate, were also employed in the gun-boats, or about the island.

Early on the morning of the 22d, the enemy was discovered landing a large force, round the point of the Nansemond ; and about 8 A. M., the barges of the vessels of war attempted to land in front of Craney Island, at a point where they were safe from the fire of the gun-boats, though exposed to that of the seamen's battery. Mr. Neal now opened his fire, which was directed with great coolness and precision, and, after having three of his boats sunk, the enemy abandoned the attempt. The narrative of the re-

mainder of the operations of this day belongs to the general history of the war, rather than to a work of this character.

The officers, seamen, and marines of the Constellation, as well as the other portions of the navy employed on this occasion, gained credit for their steadiness, discipline, and spirit. One of the barges sunk was said to have been a peculiar boat, called, from the great number of oars she rowed, the Centipede. She was described as having been fifty feet long, and as having contained seventy-five men. About forty prisoners were made from the boats that were sunk, though the total loss of the enemy who were opposed to the seamen and marines is not known. Captain Cassin, in describing the fire of the seamen's battery, observed that it resembled the shooting of riflemen. There is no doubt that the enemy found it much too cool and direct to be faced.

The government had fitted out several small vessels for the defence of the bays and rivers, and among others were the Scorpion and Asp. On the 14th those two little cruisers got under way from the Yeocomico, and stood out into the river, when, at 10 A.M., a considerable force of the enemy was seen in chase. The Scorpion, on board of which was the senior officer, immediately made a signal for the Asp to act at discretion, and began to beat up the river. The Asp being a dull sailer, her commander, Mr. Sigourney, thought it expedient to re-enter the creek. He was followed by two brigs, which anchored off the bar, and hoisted out their boats. Mr. Sigourney now deemed it more prudent to run higher up the Yeocomico; and as the enemy was already pulling in, he cut his cable, and made sail. Three boats soon after attacked the

Asp, which made a very gallant defence, and handsomely beat them off. The enemy, however, reinforced, and renewed the attack with five boats, when Mr. Sigourney ran the Asp on shore, and was boarded by about fifty men, who succeeded in carrying her. She was set on fire and abandoned, but Mr. M'Clintock, the officer second in command, got on board her again, and succeeded in extinguishing the flames. In this affair Mr. Sigourney was killed, dying sword in hand, in defence of his vessel, in a manner to reflect the highest credit on his professional training and personal gallantry.* The Asp had but two or three light guns, and a crew of twenty-one souls. Of the latter, ten were killed, wounded and missing; facts that attest the gallantry of the defence.

While these events were occurring in the south, some movements farther north brought a part of the enemy's force within the waters of Long Island Sound, where, with occasional changes of ships, it continued to the close of the war. After the United States had refitted at New York, on her return from the cruise in which she had captured the Macedonian, Com. Decatur prepared to sail again, with the latter frigate in company. The Hornet being about to go to sea, at the same time, in order to join the Chesapeake, Captain Lawrence, the three vessels got under way, and passed Hell Gate on the 27th of May, with a view to run off the coast between Montauk and Block Island. It was June the 11th before the ships found an op-

* Mr. Sigourney was from Boston, and had served as a midshipman under Lawrence, in whose school he obtained his notions of duty. Few persons discovered more aptitude for the profession than this young gentleman, who, at the time of his death, had been but five years in the service. His age must have been about twenty-one.

portunity to pass through the Race; but they were met near the end of the island by a greatly superior force, and were chased into New London. Here all three of the vessels were closely blockaded, nor was either of the frigates able to get to sea during the remainder of the war, though opportunities were long and anxiously sought. In the end, their officers and people were transferred to other vessels. It will give an idea of the great importance that ought to be attached to the means of raising blockades, when it is remembered that, while watching the three American vessels which then lay in the Thames, above New London, the enemy also had it in his power to blockade the most important point on the continent, connected with the coasting trade.

About this time, also, a small brig called the Viper, which had been put into the service, under the orders of Lieutenant John D. Henley, was taken by the Narcissus thirty-two, under circumstances that require no particular description. Mr. Henley, as well as Mr. Crane of the Nautilus, Mr. Nicholson of the Siren, Mr. Watson of the Argus, Mr. Renshaw of the Rattlesnake, Captain Reed of the Vixen, and all the officers and men under their orders, were found, by regular courts of inquiry, to have done their duty on the several occasions in which they had lost the different vessels named.

The United States schooner Ferret, Lieutenant Kearney, another of the little vessels employed on the southern coast, in order to protect the bays, rivers, sounds, and inlets, was lost in February, 1814, on the breakers of Stoney Inlet, but her people were all saved.

In January of the same year, the Alligator, ano-

ther small schooner, commanded by Mr. Basset, a sailing master, was lying at anchor off the coast, abreast of Cole's Island; and observing an enemy's frigate and brig, just without the breakers, Mr. Basset suspected that an attempt would be made on him in the course of the night. Preparations to receive the enemy were made accordingly. About half-past seven in the evening, six boats were discovered, under cover of the marsh grass, pulling up with muffled oars. When near enough, they were hailed, and a musket was fired at them. The boats now made a general discharge of musketry and grape, which the Alligator immediately returned. The schooner then cut her cable, and availing herself of a light breeze, she was immediately brought under command of her helm. By this promptitude, Mr. Basset succeeded in beating off his assailants, notwithstanding the schooner soon after grounded. The Alligator had two men killed, and two wounded, while the loss of the enemy was never known. The schooner had but forty men on board, while the boats are thought to have contained about one hundred. Of the latter, the loss must have been severe, or they would not have abandoned the attack, after the Alligator had grounded. The firing continued half an hour, and the schooner was a good deal cut up in her sails and rigging. A large cutter, that was supposed to have been one of the boats of the enemy on this occasion, was shortly after picked up on North Edisto, much injured by shot. The bodies of one officer and of a common seaman were also found near by. The former had lost an arm, besides receiving a musket-shot wound. Mr. Basset was promoted for his gallantry.

We will connect the incidents that relate to the

Alligator, by recording here, a singular accident that not long after befel her. After refitting, she returned to her cruising ground, under Mr. Basset; and July 1st, 1814, while lying in Port Royal Sound, off the island of St. Simons, on the coast of Georgia, a black cloud was seen rapidly approaching from the direction of the continent. As this gust had every appearance of a tornado, Mr. Basset, certain it would capsise his schooner, unless avoided by getting before the wind, cut his cable, got the head of his jib up, and endeavoured to run the Alligator ashore. The vessel was no sooner dead before the wind, than she was struck by a tremendous gust, which she withstood; when, believing the danger over, Mr. Basset ordered the helm down, and the small bower let go. This brought the vessel up. In about ten minutes, however, she was struck by another gust, and the second cable was cut. Unhappily, it was useless, for this new effort of the wind whirled the Alligator round and round, and upset her, as if she had been a shell. The schooner filled and sank in four fathoms' water, with her head to the eastward. Unfortunately, a cutter, that was lying on one side of the deck, was thrown over to the other, killing or desperately wounding many persons, and catching Messrs. Brailesford and Rogerson, midshipmen, beneath it. These two gentlemen, and seventeen men, were known to have been drowned; four were missing, who most probably shared the same fate, and sixteen persons were saved. The Alligator was subsequently raised.

The in-shore war at the south was distinguished by many other little exploits, resembling those already related; one of which, that was performed under the eyes of Captain Dent, who commanded at Charleston,

is deserving of particular notice. Although it will be advancing the time to a period near the close of the war, it may be related here, with a view to present to the reader most of these isolated instances of gallantry in one picture.

In January, 1815, while Captain Dent was at the North Edisto, he obtained information that a party of officers and men, belonging to the Hebrus, Captain Palmer, was watering on one of the islands of the vicinity, and he directed Mr. Lawrence Kearny to proceed outside, with three barges, to cut them off, while a party of militia endeavoured to assail them by land. The frigate was at anchor, out of gun-shot; but as soon as she perceived the design of the Americans, she fired guns, and made other signals of recal, when two of the boats pulled towards her, and a tender, that contained a strong party, attempted to run out also. Fortunately the wind shifted, bringing the Hebrus to the windward of the American barges, it is true, but the tender to leeward of them. Dicovering his advantage, Mr. Kearny determined to make a dash at the latter, regardless of the frigate, and of the two boats that were pulling off. The Hebrus, perceiving the danger in which her tender was placed, now made the greatest exertions to save her. Shot were fired at her own cutters, to drive them back to the assistance of the tender; and a third boat was sent from the frigate, with the same object. She also opened her fire on the American barges, with some effect, one of her shot taking off the head of a man at Mr. Kearny's side. But this gallant officer, disregarding everything but his object, laid the tender aboard in the steadiest manner, and carried her off, directly under the guns of the frigate to which she

belonged. The Hebrus' launch was also taken, her people having hurried on board the tender when the alarm was given. The latter had a carronade and six brass swivels in her, besides other arms.

Mr. Kearny made about forty prisoners on this occasion. The Hebrus intercepting his return by the way he had come out, he carried his prize to the South Edisto.

A few days later, Mr. Kearny, in the launch of the Hebrus, with a crew of twenty-five men, went out and captured a tender belonging to the Severn, having on board between thirty and forty men. Handsomer exploits of the sort were not performed in the war.*

To this list of the minor conflicts may be added an attack on gun-boat No. 160, commanded by Mr. Paine. This officer, who then held the rank of sailing-master, was convoying a number of coasters from Savannah to St. Mary's, when an expedition, consisting of a tender full of men, and ten boats, attacked him in St. Andrew's Sound, about three A. M. of the 6th of October, 1814. After a short cannonading, and a sharp discharge of musketry that lasted about twenty minutes, the enemy closed, and carried the boat by boarding. There were but sixteen men fit for duty

* The services and professional character of Captain Kearny, who is still living, are much better known to the navy than to the country. This gentleman was put in situations of command and responsibility soon after he entered the service in 1807 ; and while a lieutenant, he probably had commanded vessels longer than any captain then on the list. He commanded the Enterprise many years as a lieutenant; and before he was made a master and commander, had passed about ten years in separate commands. In the Mediterranean, at a much later day, it was said of this officer, that his ship, the Warren, twenty, had done more to suppress piracy than all the other vessels, French, English, American, and Russian, united. Captain Kearny's mother was a sister of the regretted Lawrence, whose family name he bears.

in No. 160 at the time; her entire complement consisting of thirty souls. Mr. Paine was badly wounded, as were two of his people. The enemy suffered severely, the defence having been spirited and obstinate.*

A short notice of the warfare in the Delaware properly occurs next. This bay had no longer the importance it possessed in the war of 1775. Then, Philadelphia was both the commercial and political capital of the country, but it had now lost the latter distinction, and, in the way of shipping, several ports were fast outstripping it. The enemy, consequently, paid much less attention to these waters than to those of the Chesapeake, and to other points of more interest. The length of the river, too, added to the security of the places that lie on its banks, and there was little apprehension of any serious descent. Still a flotilla, consisting of gun-boats and block-sloops, had been equipped, and it was put under the orders of Lieutenant Angus, an officer of tried spirit.

On the 29th of July, 1813, Mr. Angus learned that an enemy's sloop of war had come round the cape, and he dropped down to reconnoitre, with eight gun-boats and two block-sloops. The sloop of war had grounded on the outside of Crow's shoals, and it was determined to attack her. Before the flotilla could get in order, however, a frigate came in, and anchored within supporting distance of the sloop. At length all the boats but one, No. 121, Mr. Shead, were in their stations, and the cannonading commenced. No. 121 had unfortunately drifted a mile and a half from her consorts, and, though she kept sweeping,

* Mr. Paine was promoted for his good conduct, and is now a commander.

no exertions could get her back into the line. After a sharp cannonade of more than an hour, the British vessels sent eight boats, with a strong party of men, against the straggler. Finding all his efforts to regain the line ineffectual, Mr. Shead anchored, and prepared to receive the enemy, with a coolness that was very creditable. As soon as his boat was steady, Mr. Shead fired at the enemy. At the first discharge, the pintle of the gun gave way. Notwithstanding this accident, a second shot was fired, and with effect, but the gun-carriage was nearly torn to pieces. Mr. Shead loaded again, in the hope of obtaining an accidental range, but without success. In the mean time the enemy steadily advanced, keeping up a warm fire from his boat-guns and small arms, and the people of No. 121 prepared to repel boarders. The overwhelming force of the assailants, however, rendered resistance useless, and the English soon covered the decks of the gun-boat, her people being driven below.

The enemy's ships were the Junon 38, and Martin 16; and their loss was seven killed and twelve wounded. No. 121 had seven men wounded.

During the summer of 1813, after the capture of the Chesapeake, the American government had but three frigates at sea; the President 44, the Congress 38, and the Essex 32. The Constitution 44, was undergoing repairs; the Constellation 38, was blockaded at Norfolk, and the United States 44, and Macedonian 38, were closely watched in the Thames, at New London. The Adams 28, was undergoing repairs and alterations; the John Adams 28, after having been once cut down, and once raised upon, had been laid up, as unfit to cruise in such a war. She was subsequently cut down a second time, but was not yet in a condition

to go to sea; and the New York 36, and Boston 28, were virtually condemned. The war had continued but little more than a year, when all the brigs were captured, with the exception of the Enterprise, which, as has been already stated, was no longer trusted at sea.

The loss of the small vessels induced professional men to reflect on the causes, and it appears to have been the better opinion, that too many guns were crowded upon them, and that they were over-manned. The great number of people on board, in particular, helped to impede the sailing, by compelling the vessels to take in a larger stock of provisions and supplies than they were originally intended to carry, bringing them too low in the water; the lightness of their frames, and their sharpness, rendering it impossible to dispense with a corresponding weight of iron ballast. Had these vessels remained schooners, with crews of seventy or eighty men, and their original armaments, their chances for running would probably have been much increased. It should be remembered, however, that a small cruiser is always much more liable to be captured than a large one, as a frigate is of sufficient force to defeat the attempts of more than half the vessels of war that are usually fallen in with at sea.

The administration manifested prudence and foresight in the class of vessels that were now constructed to supersede the smaller cruisers, sloops of war of a size and force that were sufficient to resist anything beneath the smaller frigates, having been laid down. These vessels were large enough to carry sail hard, while their crews bore no proportion to those of the little craft mentioned. Of nearly three times their

tonnage, they did not carry twice the number of the people of the latter, and, of course, were enabled to dispense with a proportionate amount of stores. In the end, their good qualities were made manifest; and had hostilities continued for any length of time, it is probable, that the large class sloop of war would have been found to be the most serviceable vessel the country could have employed, in the absence of a force sufficient to keep the coast entirely clear of the enemy.

CHAPTER XX.

Launch of large vessels—Cruise of the Adams—The Adams set on fire—Cruise of the Wasp—Action between the Wasp and Reindeer—The Wasp and Avon—Captures by the Wasp—Loss of the Wasp—Cruise of the Peacock—The Peacock and the Epervier—The Peacock chased—Cruise of the President.

The Guerriere 44, the first frigate that had been put into the water, on the sea-board, by the American government, since the year 1801, was launched at Philadelphia, June the 20th, 1814. It was intended that the Independence 74 should have gone off the same day at Boston, but she stuck on the ways. She was got safely into the water on the 20th of July, however, and was the first two-decked ship that ever properly belonged to the American navy; the America 74 having been given to the king of France, while yet on the stocks. The Java 44 soon followed, at Baltimore. Commodore Rogers was appointed to the Guerriere, Commodore Bainbridge to the Independence, and Captain Perry to the Java. These were the only large vessels that were launched on the Atlantic during the war, though the keels of the Franklin 74, Washington 74, and Columbia 44, were laid, and the two first

ships were eventually got afloat; the Franklin in 1815, and the Washington in the succeeding year.

The new sloops of war began to go to sea in the course of this summer. The Frolic 18, Captain Bainbridge, had a short career, having been chased and captured, on the 20th of April, 1814, by the Orpheus 36, Captain Pigot, soon after she got out. There was no action, the Frolic having thrown most of her guns overboard in the chase.

The Adams 28 had been cut down to a sloop of war and lengthened at Washington, so as to mount twenty-eight guns on one deck, under the law of 1812. She succeeded in passing the enemy's ships in Lynnhaven Bay, on the night of the 18th of January, 1814, under the command of Captain Morris, an officer whose career has been incidentally traced from the rank of midshipman up to that which he now held. The Adams ran off east, to get into the track of the English East Indiamen, and she made several prizes of no great value. On the 25th of March, however, she captured the Woodbridge Indiaman, and while taking possession, the weather clearing up, Captain Morris found himself directly to leeward of twenty-five sail, with two vessels of war, one of which was a heavy ship, running down for him. The prize was necessarily abandoned, and the Adams was chased until the following day, when the enemy resumed his course. The Adams continued her cruise, going into Savannah, in April, for supplies. On the 5th of May she sailed again, going off the Mantilla Reef, in waiting for the Jamaica convoy, which, unfortunately, passed her in the night. The Adams, on ascertaining this fact, gave chase, and got in sight of the fleet, but was driven off by two vessels of war. By no artifice could Captain Morris cut a vessel out, however,

the ships sailing in the closest possible order, and the cruisers in company manifesting great vigilance.

The Adams now stood to the northward and eastward, falling in with much ice, and thick weather, in the latitude of New York. On the 3d of July she made the Irish coast, and on the 4th she chased two vessels into the mouth of the Shannon. The thick weather was much against the Adams, and she ran more to the southward. In lat. 49°, long. 10°, an enemy's frigate was made on the lee bow, and a hard chase ensued. By sunset the frigate was nearly within gun-shot, and the wind being light, the Adams cut away her anchors, and threw overboard two guns. In the course of the night it fell calm, and Captain Morris, who had participated so largely in the escape of the Constitution, got out his boats to tow. As the first lieutenant of the Adams (Mr. Wadsworth) had been the second lieutenant with Captain Hull on that celebrated occasion, these officers employed their time so well during the night, that when day dawned, the enemy was near two leagues astern. This industry probably saved the ship, for the frigate proved to be very fast, nor did she give up the chase until ten the succeeding night, when the Adams altered her course and escaped.

Shortly after, the Adams was chased by two more frigates, one of which was on her lee bow, and the other on her beam. The last of these vessels continued just out of gun-shot near twenty-four hours, when she was avoided also, by changing the course in the night. The ship had now been near two months in a cold, foggy, damp atmosphere, and the scurvy made its appearance on board. So many men were seized with this terrible disease, that Captain Morris

deemed it prudent to go into port. At four A. M., on the 17th of August, in very thick weather, the Adams ran ashore on the Isle of Haute, but was got off by lightening. It was found, however, that she made nine feet of water in an hour, and Captain Morris succeeded in getting her into the Penobscot, in Maine, as high up as Hampden, which is several miles above Castine.

While the Adams lay ready to be hove out, with nothing in her, a strong expedition of the enemy, consisting of troops and vessels of war, entered the river, and ascended as high as Hampden. A small force of militia was assembled, and a battery was mounted with the guns of the ship, in order to protect her; but the irregular troops giving way, and leaving the seamen and marines exposed in the rear, the first without muskets, nothing remained but to set the vessel on fire, and to make a retreat. All the service connected with the ship was performed in the most orderly and creditable manner, until a part of the country was reached where it was found impossible to subsist the men in a body, on account of the distance between the habitations, when the people were directed to break up into small parties, and to make the best of their way to Portland. It is a fact worthy of being recorded, that every man rejoined his commander, according to orders, though a fatiguing march of two hundred miles was necessary to do so. Captain Morris showed great resources in these trying circumstances; and Messrs. Wadsworth, Madison, Parker, and Beatty, the lieutenants of the ship, Mr. Watson, of the marine corps, and Mr. Rogers, the purser, were exceedingly active and useful. Indeed, all the officers and men of the Adams appear to have behaved more than commonly well.

But one seaman and one marine fell into the enemy's hands.

The ship had made many prizes during this cruise, most of which were destroyed.

While the Adams was thus running the chances of chases and shipwreck, the Wasp 18, Captain Blakely, sailed from Portsmouth, N. H., on a cruise. This was one of the new sloops of war already mentioned, and the name of the favourite vessel, captured by the Poictiers, had been given to her. A letter from Captain Blakely announced that he was in the offing, on the 1st of May, 1814, with a fine breeze at N. W. He ran off the coast without molestation, and soon appeared near the chops of the English Channel, where he began to repeat the ravages caused by the Argus. The position of the ship now exacted the utmost vigilance, as she was in the very track of the enemy. At a quarter past four A. M., on the 24th of June, 1814, the Wasp, then cruising in lat. 48° 36′ N., long. 11° 15′ W., made two sail, a little forward of the lee beam. The weather was fine, the wind light, and the water exceedingly smooth for that sea. After keeping away in chase, another stranger was discovered on the weather beam, when the ship was immediately brought by the wind, in order to close with her, it being obviously expedient for the American vessel to select the antagonist that had the most weatherly position. At ten, the chase showed English colours, and began to make signals. At noon, her signals were repeated, and she fired a gun. The Wasp did not go to quarters until fifteen minutes past one; and soon after, believing he could weather the chase, Captain Blakely tacked. The stranger also tacked, however, and stood off, no doubt to preserve the weather gage. The Wasp now showed her ensign,

and fired a gun to windward. The enemy, a large man-of-war brig, gallantly answered this defiance. The Wasp immediately set her light canvass to close, when, at thirty-two minutes past two, the enemy tacked, and began to draw near. The American now took in her light sails, and tacked in her turn; the English vessel still maintaining her weatherly position, and making sail to close.

At seventeen minutes past three, the enemy was on the weather quarter of the Wasp, distant about sixty yards, when he fired his shifting-gun, a twelve-pound carronade mounted on a top-gallant forecastle. Two minutes later he fired again; and the discharges were repeated until the gun had been deliberately fired five times into the Wasp, at that short distance, and in unusually smooth water. All this time the Wasp could not bring a gun to bear; and finding that the enemy drew ahead very slowly, Captain Blakely put his helm down, and made a half-board, firing from aft forward, as the guns bore. He now hauled up the mainsail, and the two ships being necessarily very near, every shot told. But the fire of the Wasp was too heavy to be borne, and the brig ran her aboard, on her starboard quarter, at forty minutes past three, her larboard-bow coming foul. The English now made several trials to enter the Wasp, led by their commander in person, but were repulsed with steadiness and without confusion. Two or three desperate efforts were made, but with the same want of success, when, at forty-four minutes past three, Captain Blakely gave the order, in turn, to go on board the Englishman, and in one minute his flag was lowered. On the part of the enemy, this action lasted twenty-eight minutes; on the part of the Wasp, nineteen minutes, including the time employed in boarding.

The prize was his Britannic Majesty's sloop of war Reindeer 18, Captain Manners. The Reindeer was an ordinary thirty-two-pounder brig, but, like the Peacock, her armament, when taken, was of twenty-four-pound carronades. She mounted eighteen guns, besides the shifting carronade, and had a complement on board of one hundred and eighteen souls. Her loss was twenty-five killed, and forty-two wounded; ten of the latter dangerously. Among the slain was Captain Manners; and the first lieutenant and master were wounded. The Wasp had five men killed, and twenty-two wounded. Two midshipmen, both of whom subsequently died, were among the latter. The Reindeer was literally cut to pieces, in a line with her ports; her upper works, boats, and spare-spars being one entire wreck. A breeze springing up next day, her foremast fell. The Wasp was hulled six times, and she was filled with grape. The principal loss she sustained in men, however, was in repelling the attempt to board.

It is difficult to say which vessel behaved the best in this short but gallant combat. The officers and people of the Wasp discovered the utmost steadiness, a cool activity, and an admirable discipline. For eleven minutes they bore the fire of a twelve-pounder, that was discharging round and grape, at a distance varying from sixty to thirty yards, with a subordination and quiet that could not possibly be surpassed; and when it did commence, their own fire was terrible. The attempts to carry their ship were repulsed with ease and coolness, and when the order to go on board the enemy was received, it was obeyed with decision and promptitude. Throughout the whole affair the

ship was conspicuous for the qualities that most denote a perfect man-of-war, and the results of her efforts were in proportion. It is believed, notwithstanding, that this ship had an unusual number of men on board of her, who were now at sea for the first time.

On the other hand, the attack of the Reindeer has usually been considered the most creditable to the enemy of any that occurred in this war. It is scarcely possible that the English could have mistaken a ship, with the air and style of the Wasp, for a privateer; and Captain Manners, in engaging her, like Captain Allen of the Argus, must have been conscious that he was going into action with a vessel heavier than his own. The mode in which he approached was exceedingly officer-like; and when he discovered the hopelessness of contending against the fire to which he found himself so suddenly and unexpectedly exposed, the decision and gallantry with which he attempted to retrieve the day by boarding, was of the highest order of military and personal merit. It is understood that the enemy had endeavoured to persuade himself that the Chesapeake had been captured by his superior prowess in hand to hand conflicts, a delusion so general in Great Britain, as has been already stated, that it has frequently led their officers into serious disasters in America; and it is possible that the commander of the Reindeer may have believed his crew, which is said to have been better than common, able to carry the Wasp in this manner. The result showed the difference between a crew that was well commanded, and one that had no leaders, but in no degree detracts from the merit of the English

officer, whose personal deportment in this affair is described as having been worthy of all praise.*

Captain Blakely put a portion of his wounded prisoners on board a neutral, and proceeded himself to L'Orient, where he arrived on the 8th of July with the remainder. The prize was burnt, on account of the great danger of recapture.

After a detention in port until the 27th of August, the Wasp sailed on another cruise. Two prizes were made when a few days out, and on the 1st of September she cut a vessel, loaded with guns and military stores, out of a convoy of ten sail that was under the care of the Armada 74, but was chased off by the enemy in an attempt to seize another. On the evening of the same day, while running free, four sail were seen nearly at the same time, of which two were on the larboard and two on the starboard bow. The latter being farthest to windward, the Wasp hauled up for the most weatherly of them. At seven P. M. the chase began to make signals, with flags, lanterns, rockets, and guns. The Wasp disregarded all, but kept steadily approaching. At twenty minutes past nine she had the enemy on her lee bow, within hail, and a gun was fired into him. The shot was returned, when Captain Blakely put his helm up, and passed to leeward, under an apprehension that the enemy might attempt to escape, for it was blowing fresh, and the ship was running ten knots at the moment. This

* Captain Manners received three wounds before the attempt to board, one shot having nearly carried away the calves of both legs. In endeavouring to board, he sprang into the rigging of his own vessel, when he was struck on the upper part of the head by two musket balls, which passed through to the chin. Flourishing his sword, he fell dead on his own deck.

was easily effected, the enemy being still in doubt as to the character of the Wasp, both vessels hailing. As soon as she had got the desired position, however, the American ship poured in a broadside, and a warm engagement commenced at twenty-nine minutes past nine. The firing was close and severe, though the combat had the usual embarrassments of a night action. By ten o'clock, notwithstanding the darkness and the swell that was on at the time, the fire of the enemy had ceased, and Captain Blakely hailed to ascertain if he had surrendered. Receiving no answer, and a few guns being fired on board the English vessel, the Wasp poured in a fresh broadside, but at twelve minutes past ten, perceiving that the enemy did not fire any longer, he was again hailed, with a demand to know if he had surrendered. The answer was in the affirmative, and the Wasp lowered a boat to take possession. Before the latter struck the water, however, the smoke having blown away, another vessel was seen astern, coming up fast, when the boat was run up again, the people were sent to the guns, which had been secured, and the Wasp was brought under command, in readiness to receive this second antagonist. At thirty-six minutes past ten, two more sail were seen astern; and it became necessary to abandon the prize.

The helm of the Wasp was now put up, and the ship ran off dead before the wind, in order to reeve new braces, and in the hope of drawing the nearest vessel farther from her consorts. This vessel continued the chase, until she got quite near the Wasp, when she hauled her wind across the stern of the latter, delivered a broadside, and made stretches to rejoin the captured vessel, which, by this time, was

firing guns of distress. It would have been easy for the second vessel to run alongside of the Wasp, but the urgent situation of her consort probably prevented the step.

As the Wasp left her prize so suddenly, she had no means of learning her name or loss. She had herself but two men killed, and one wounded, the latter by a wad, a circumstance that proves the closeness of the combat. She was hulled four times, had a good many grape in her, and was much cut up aloft. All that Captain Blakely could state concerning his enemy, was his impression that she was one of the largest brigs in the British navy. The four shot that hulled the Wasp weighed each just thirty-two pounds. She had many hands in her tops, and otherwise appeared to be strongly manned.*

It is now known that the vessel captured by the Wasp, was the Avon eighteen, Captain Arbuthnot. The brig that followed the Wasp, and fired into her, was the Castilian eighteen, and one of the other vessels in sight was also a cruiser. The Avon was so much injured that she sunk, and it was with great difficulty that the other vessels saved her people. By some accounts, indeed, a few of the wounded were lost. The loss of men on board the Avon is not accurately

* Captain Blakely adds, that the enemy's shot weighed one pound and three-quarters more than any on board the Wasp. This would make the thirty-two pound shot of the Wasp weigh about thirty pounds, and was probably near the proportion that all the American shot of that day bore to their nominal weight. It follows, that in this action the metal of the enemy was about two pounds heavier to the gun than that of the Wasp, while, in the action with the Reindeer, the Wasp's metal was only about six pounds heavier to the gun than that of her enemy. In both these cases the long guns are excepted; the American ship probably carrying heavier metal forward than the English.

known, the statements varying from thirty to fifty. The vessel was cut up in an extraordinary manner. She is believed to have mounted eighteen thirty-two pound carronades, with the usual chase guns, and to have had a crew of one hundred and twenty men in her.

Captain Blakely's conduct on this occasion had all the merit shown in the previous action, with the additional claim of engaging an enemy under circumstances which led him to believe that her consorts were in his immediate vicinity. The steady officer-like manner in which the Avon was destroyed, and the coolness with which he prepared to engage the Castilian, within ten minutes after his first antagonist had struck, are the best eulogiums on this officer's character and spirit, as well as on the school in which he had been trained.

The action between the Wasp and the Avon occurred on the 1st of September 1814, (sea-time,) in lat. 47° 30, N. long. 11° W. September the 12th, in lat. 38° 2, N., and long. 14° 58, W., the former ship took the brig Three Brothers, and scuttled her. September 14th, in lat. 37° 22, N. long. 14° 33, W., she took the brig Bacchus, and scuttled her. September the 21st, in lat. 33° 12, N. long. 14° 56 W., she took the brig Atalanta, 8, with 19 men. As this was a valuable prize, Mr. Geisinger, one of the midshipmen of the Wasp, was put on board her, and she was sent to America. The Atalanta arrived safely at Savannah, Nov. 4th, and brought the last direct intelligence that was ever received from the regretted Blakely and the Wasp. Various accounts have been given of the manner in which she was probably lost, but nothing that can be deemed authentic has ever

been ascertained. It will be seen that the ship had got as far south as the Azores, when Mr. Geisinger left her, and she was, in fact, cruising between those islands and the Straits of Gibraltar when Captain Blakely wrote his last letter. There is a rumour that an English frigate went into Cadiz, much crippled, and with a very severe loss of men, about this time, and that she reported her injuries to have been received in an engagement with a heavy American corvette, the latter disappearing so suddenly, in the night, that it was thought she had sunk. This story can be traced to no authentic source. By another account the ship had been wrecked on the African coast, and, for a short time, it was believed that her people were prisoners among the Arabs. The probability is, that the Wasp foundered either in a gale or in a squall, though she may have been lost by any of the other accidents of the ocean. A man-of-war, in particular, always runs a certain risk from her magazine, and as ships are known to have been blown up in port, it is probable that some, which suddenly disappear, are blown up at sea.

An accident occurred a few years after the last direct intelligence was received from this gallant ship, that suddenly and keenly revived the interest of the public, which had begun to settle into a saddened sympathy with the friends of those who had perished, in her fate. It will be remembered that Acting Lieutenant M'Knight, and Mr. Lyman, a master's mate, both of the Essex, had been exchanged by Captain Hillyar, and taken to Rio Janeiro, in the Phœbe, with a view to make certain affidavits necessary to the condemnation of the American frigate. These gentlemen, after remaining some time in Brazil, took passage in

a Swedish brig bound to England, as the only means of getting home. A long time passing without any intelligence from Mr. M'Knight and his companion, inquiries were set on foot, which terminated in ascertaining this fact, and, subsequently, in finding the master of the Swedish brig, who proved by his log-book and other documents, that he had fallen in with the Wasp, of eighteen guns, Captain Blakely, when his two passengers seized the occasion to put themselves under the flag.*

* "*Extracts from the Journal kept on board the Swedish brig Adonis, during a voyage from Rio de Janeiro, towards Falmouth, in the year* 1814.

"August 23.—Left Rio de Janeiro; Stephen Decatur M'Knight, and James Lyman, passengers for England.

"Oct. 9th.—In lat. 18° 35′ N., long. 30° 10′ W., sea account, at eight o'clock in the morning, discovered a strange sail giving chase to us, and fired several guns; she gaining very fast. At half past ten o'clock hove to, and was boarded by an officer dressed in an English doctor's uniform; the vessel also hoisted an English ensign. The officer proceeded to examine my ship's papers, &c. &c., likewise the letter-bags, and took from one of them a letter to the Victualling-office, London. Finding I had two American officers as passengers, he immediately left the ship, and went on board the sloop of war; he shortly after returned, took the American gentlemen with him, and went a second time on board the sloop. In about half an hour, he returned again with Messrs. M'Knight and Lyman, and they informed me that the vessel was the United States sloop of war, the Wasp, commanded by Captain Bleaky, or Blake, last from France, where she had re-fitted; had lately sunk the Reindeer, English sloop of war, and another vessel which sunk without their being able to save a single person, or learn the vessel's name,—that Messrs. Knight and Lyman had now determined to leave me, and go on board the Wasp—paid me their passage in dollars at 5*s.* 9*d.*, and having taken their luggage on board the Wasp, they made sail to the southward. Shortly after they had left, I found that Lieutenant M'Knight had left his writing-desk behind; and I immediately made signal for the Wasp to return, and stood towards her; they, observing my signals, stood back, came alongside, and sent their boat on board for the writing-desk; after which they sent me a log-line, and some other presents, and made all sail in a direction for the line; and I have reason to suppose for the convoy that passed on Thursday previous."

The Peacock, 18, Captain Warrington, went to sea from New York, in March 1814, and proceeded to the southward as far as the Great Isaacs, cruising in that vicinity along the Florida shore, to Cape Carnaveral. On the 29th of April, in lat. 27° 47′, N.

This is the last intelligence from the Wasp. It is sixteen days later than that brought in by the prize, and places the ship about nine hundred miles farther south, and about six hundred miles farther west, than she was when Mr. Geisinger left her. There is little doubt that Captain Blakely intended to run down towards the Spanish main, and to pass through the West Indies in order to get into a southern port, according to his orders. There is only one other rumour in reference to this ship, that has any appearance of probability. It is said that two English frigates chased an American sloop of war, off the southern coast, about the time the Wasp ought to have arrived, and that the three ships were struck with a heavy squall, in which the sloop of war suddenly disappeared. There is nothing surprising in a vessel of that size being capsized in a squall, especially when carrying sail hard, to escape enemies, but it would be very extraordinary if no traces of her should be found floating on the ocean, or drifted ashore. The rumour, like that of the action with the frigate, has probably no foundation.

Captain Blakely was a citizen of North Carolina. He received the portion of his education that was obtained on shore, in the university of his own state, and he entered the navy February 5th, 1800. He was in the Mediterranean under Preble, and saw the service usual to officers of his rank. His first command was the Enterprise 14, and his second and last, the vessel in which he perished. He was married, and left an only child, a daughter, whom the legislature of North Carolina asked permission to educate. He lived to the age of thirty-three. This gentleman enjoyed a high reputation in the service, which his short career as a commander fully justified. There is little doubt, had he survived, that Captain Blakely would have risen to the highest consideration in his profession. As it was, few officers have left better names behind them.

On board the Wasp, there perished with Captain Blakely, Lieutenants Reilly, Tillinghast and Baury. Messrs. Reilly and Baury had been midshipmen in the Constitution when she took the Guerriere and the Java, and, after contending with the enemy successfully in four combats, it was their hard fate to die in the manner conjectured. Mr. Tillinghast was very active in the capture of the Boxer, and was an excellent officer. The present Captain Geisinger was the only one officer saved from the Wasp.

long. 80° 9′, three sail were made to windward, under convoy of a large brig of war. The merchantmen hauled up to E. N. E., and the sloop of war edged away for the American ship. The two vessels were soon alongside of each other, when a close action commenced. The Peacock received two thirty-two pound shot in the quarter of her fore-yard, from the first broadside of the enemy, which rendered the head-sails nearly useless. This injury compelled the Peacock to fight running large, and prevented much manœuvring, the combat being effectually decided by gunnery, At the end of forty-two minutes the enemy struck, and possession was taken of him.

The prize was his Britannic Majesty's brig Epervier, 18, Captain Wales. The Epervier was extensively injured, having received no less than forty-five shot in her hull, and had twenty-two men killed and wounded. Her main-top-mast was over the side, her main-boom was shot away, her foremast tottering, her bowsprit badly wounded, standing rigging much cut, and she had five feet water in her hold. The Peacock received very little injury, that done the foreyard being the principal, while her hull escaped almost entirely, not a round shot touching it. No person was killed, and only two men were wounded.

The Peacock was a heavier vessel than the Epervier, while, as usual, the disparity in the loss was infinitely greater than that in the force. The metal was nominally the same; but if the shot of the Peacock were as short of weight as those of the Wasp are known to have been, she threw at a broadside only twenty pounds of metal more than her antagonist. The Epervier mounted eighteen thirty-two pound

carronades, and it would seem had no chase guns; her crew consisted of one hundred and twenty-eight men. On board this vessel were found 118,000 dollars in specie.

In one hour after the retreat from quarters was beat, the Peacock had her fore-yard fished, and, in all respects, was ready again to engage. The Epervier struck about 11 A. M., and by sunset she was in a condition to carry sail. It was only by the greatest exertions, however, that she was, at first, kept from sinking.

Mr. J. B. Nicolson, the first lieutenant of the Peacock, was put in charge of the prize, with directions to make the best of his way to Savannah. The southern coast was then much infested by the enemy, and, as Captain Warrington knew that she was liable to be brought to action at any moment, he determined to convoy his prize into port. On the evening of the 29th of April, or the day of the capture, the two vessels made sail, and the next afternoon they were abreast of Amelia Island, when two frigates were discovered at the northward, and to leeward. At Mr. Nicolson's request, Captain Warrington now took all the prize crew from the Epervier but that gentleman and sixteen officers and men, intending to send the prize into St. Mary's, and to haul to the southward with the Peacock, to lead the enemy off the coast. This plan succeeded, the Peacock getting rid of the frigate that chased her, the next day. The Epervier, while subsequently running along the coast, on her way to Savannah, however, fell in with the other frigate, and keeping close in, in shoal water, the wind being light, the enemy manned his boats, and sent them in chase. There was a moment when the prize

was in great danger of falling into the hands of her pursuers, for the boats got quite near, in her wake. In this critical situation Mr. Nicolson had recourse to a stratagem to keep them off. He used the trumpet as if full of men, and when the boats were the nearest, he issued an order, in a very loud voice, to make a yaw, in order to fire a broadside. This appearance of a readiness to engage intimidated the enemy, who abandoned his attempt at a moment when he might have carried the Epervier with little or no loss. On the 1st of May the brig arrived safely at Savannah, and on the 4th the Peacock came in also. Mr. Nicolson's steadiness and ingenuity were much applauded.

Shortly after, the Peacock sailed on a cruise for the enemy's seas, the Bay of Biscay, the coast of Portugal, and among the islands, constantly changing her position to elude the English squadrons. After passing over some of the best cruising ground in the Atlantic, the ship returned to New York at the end of October, without having fallen in with an enemy of a force proper for her to engage. She captured, however, fourteen sail of merchantmen.

The President, 44, continued to cruise under the orders of Com. Rodgers, and the Congress, 38, under those of Captain Smith, with a singular want of success, when the merits of their commanders were considered. These two fine frigates traversed the Northern Atlantic, in a variety of directions, in company and singly, and yet it was never the good fortune of either to fall in with an enemy that could be brought to action. The latter ship even went south of the equator, and one of her cruises extended to eight months, but her luck did not vary.

In one of his cruises Com. Rodgers captured an enemy's man-of-war schooner, called the Highflyer, drawing her under his guns by an artifice, and this was the only English man-of-war that he took during his command of this ship.

Early in February, 1814, the President returned from a cruise of seventy-five days, a brief account of which will show the manner in which this ship sought opportunities of meeting the enemy, as well as that in which she was foiled. She sailed from Providence in December, 1813, and ran off to the southward and eastward, into long. 38° W., lat. 18° N. Here she chased two large ships, under the impression that one was an Indiaman and the other a frigate, but both proved to be frigates, and the President was chased in her turn. On this occasion the nearest vessel threw a shot over the American ship, her consort being close astern. Com. Rodgers now went off Barbadoes, and after cruising some time for a convoy, he ran down among the islands through the Mona passage, and towards the continent, striking soundings off St. Augustine. From this point the ship proceeded north, keeping as near the coast as the water would allow, until she got off Charleston. Remaining all day off the bar, Com. Rodgers continued standing to the northward, following the coast as far as Sandy Hook. As this was completely running the gauntlet among the enemy, several cruisers were seen, but always in squadron, or under circumstances that prevented an engagement.

CHAPTER XXI.

English force collected on the American coast—Skirmishes in the Chesapeake—Captain Barney's flotilla—Battle of Bladensburgh—Destruction of vessels on the stocks—Attempts with fire-ships—Death of General Ross—Attack by water—End of the warfare in the Chesapeake—Captain Barney.

THE general peace that, owing to the downfall of Napoleon, so suddenly took place in Europe, afforded England an opportunity of sending large reinforcements in ships and troops to America. Regiments that had entered France from Spain, were embarked in the Loire, with that object; and a land force of more than thirty thousand men was soon collected in the interior, or on the American coast. The ships, also, were much increased in number; and it would seem that there was a moment when some in England were flattered with the belief of being able to dictate such terms to the republic, as would even reduce its territory, if they did not affect its independence. In carrying on the war, two separate plans appear to have been adopted. One aimed at conquest—the other at harassing the coast, and at inflicting the injuries that characterise a partisan warfare.

In furtherance of the latter intention, a considerable force in ships and troops assembled in the waters of

the Chesapeake early in the summer, when the enemy attempted expeditions of greater importance, and which were more creditable to his arms than many in which he had been previously engaged, against small, exposed, and defenceless villages. The warfare of 1813 had induced the government to equip a stronger force in the Chesapeake than it had originally possessed, and Captain Joshua Barney, the officer whose name has already been mentioned, with distinction, as the captor of the General Monk, was placed at its head. The vessels of the flotilla under the orders of Captain Barney were principally barges, carrying heavy guns, though there were a few galleys, and a schooner or two.

It would exceed the limits of a work of this nature, to enter into a minute relation of all the skirmishes to which the predatory warfare of the English, in the Chesapeake, gave rise; but it is due to the officers and men employed against them to furnish an outline of their services. On various occasions parties from the ships had conflicts with the detached militia, or armed citizens, who were frequently successful. Although it is a little anticipating events, it may be mentioned here, that, in one of these skirmishes, Captain Sir Peter Parker, of the Menelaus, was killed, and his party driven off to its ship. In several other instances captures were made of boats and their crews, the people of the country frequently displaying a coolness and gallantry that were worthy of trained soldiers. On the whole, however, the vast superiority of the enemy in numbers, and his ability to choose his time and place of attack, gave the English the advantage, and their success was usually in proportion.

The presence of Captain Barney's flotilla compelled

the enemy to be more guarded, and his small vessels became cautious about approaching the shallow waters in calms, or in light winds. On the 1st of June this active and bold officer left the Patuxent, with the Scorpion, two gun-boats, and several large barges, in chase of two schooners. He was closing fast, by means of sweeps, when a large ship was discovered to the southward. Just at this moment the wind shifted, bringing the enemy to windward, blowing fresh, and becoming squally. Signal was made for the flotilla to return to the Patuxent, as the weather was particularly unfavourable for that description of force, and the ship proved to be a two-decker. On re-entering the river, the wind came ahead, when the gun-boats began to sweep up under the weather shore. One of the latter being in some danger, Captain Barney anchored with the Scorpion and the other boats, and opened a fire, which immediately drove the enemy's schooners out of the river. On this occasion the English pushed a barge in front, which began to throw Congreve rockets. By this essay it was found that the rockets could be thrown farther than shot, but that they could not be directed with any certainty. The ship of the line anchored at the mouth of the Patuxent; the enemy's barges kept hovering about it, and the American flotilla was anchored about three miles within the river.

Between the 4th and 8th of June, the enemy was joined by a rasée and a sloop-of-war, when Captain Barney removed his flotilla up the river, to the mouth of St. Leonard's creek. On the morning of the 8th, the British were seen coming up the river, the wind being fair, with a ship, a brig, two schooners, and fifteen barges, which induced Capt. Barney to remove

up St. Leonard's about two miles, when he anchored in a line abreast, and prepared to receive an attack. At 8 A. M., the ship, brig, and schooners anchored at the mouth of the creek, and the barges entered it, with the rocket boat in advance.

Captain Barney now left the Scorpion and the two gun-boats at anchor, and got his barges, thirteen in number, under way, when the enemy retreated towards their vessels outside. In the afternoon, the same manœuvre was repeated, the enemy's barge throwing a few rockets without effect.

On the afternoon of the 9th, the ship of the line having sent up a party of men, the enemy entered the creek again, having twenty barges, but, after a smart skirmish, retired. The object of these demonstrations was probably to induce the Americans to burn their vessels, or to venture out within reach of the guns of the ships, but the latter were commanded by an officer much too experienced and steady to be forced into either measure without sufficient reason. On the 11th, a still more serious attempt was made with twenty-one barges, having the two schooners in tow. Capt. Barney met them again, and, after a sharper encounter than before, drove them down upon their large vessels. On this occasion the pursuit was continued until the rasée, which, by this time, had ascended the Patuxent, and the brig opened a fire on the Americans. In this affair the English are supposed to have suffered materially, especially one of the schooners. A shot also struck the rocket-boat.

Some small works were now thrown up on the shore, to protect the American flotilla, and the blockade continued. In the mean time, Captain Miller of the marine corps joined the flotilla, and a considerable

force of militia was collected under Col. Wadsworth of the ordnance service. The enemy had also brought a frigate, in addition to the rasée, off the mouth of the creek. The largest of these vessels was believed to be the Severn, and the smallest the Narcissus thirty-two. On the 26th, an attempt was made by the united force of the Americans to raise the blockade. The cannonade was close, for the species of force employed; and it lasted two hours, when the Severn cut, and was run on a sand-bank to prevent her sinking.* It is said that a raking shot ripped a plank from her bow, and placed her in imminent danger. Shortly after, in company with the Narcissus, she dropped down the river and went into the bay. In this handsome affair the flotilla lost thirteen men in killed and wounded; but it effectually raised the blockade, and induced the enemy to be more cautious.

The portion of the flotilla that was in the Patuxent, remained in that river until the middle of August, when the enemy commenced that series of movements which terminated in his advance upon Washington. On the 16th, Captain Barney received intelligence that the British were coming up the Patuxent in force, when he sent an express to the navy department for instructions. The answer was, to land the men, and join the army that was hurriedly assembling for the defence of the coast, under General Winder, and, if pressed, to burn the flotilla.

On the 21st, the news was received that the enemy had landed a force of four or five thousand men at Benedict, and that he was marching in the direction of the capital. Captain Barney immediately landed four hundred of his party, leaving the vessels in charge

* By some accounts, the ship was the Loire.

of Mr. Frazier, with orders to set fire to them if attacked, and to join the main body with as little delay as possible. The next day this order was executed, a strong detachment of seamen and marines approaching the flotilla to attack it.

On the 22nd, Captain Barney joined the assemblage of armed citizens, that was called an army, at the wood-yard. The next day he marched into Washington, and took up his quarters in the marine barracks.

After a good deal of uncertainty concerning the movements of the enemy, it was understood he was marching directly on Washington, and that it was intended to fight him at Bladensburgh. The flotilla-men and marines left the yard on the morning of the 24th, and they arrived at the battle-ground on a trot, and were immediately drawn up about a mile to the west of Bladensburgh, holding the centre of General Winder's position. After a sharp skirmish in front, where the enemy suffered severely in crossing a bridge, the militia fell back, and the British columns appeared, following the line of the public road. The entire force of the flotilla-men and marines was about five hundred men; and they had two eighteens, and three twelve-pounders, ship's guns, mounted on travelling carriages. Captain Barney took command of the artillery in person, while Captain Miller had the disposition of the remainder of the two parties, who were armed as infantry. The marines, seventy-eight men in all, formed a line immediately on the right of the guns, while the seamen, three hundred and seventy men, were drawn up a little in their rear, and on the right flank of the marines, on ground that permitted them to fire over the heads of the latter. Although the troops that were falling back did not halt, Captain

Barney held his position, and as soon as the enemy began to throw rockets, he opened on him, with a sharp discharge of round and grape. The column was staggered, and it immediately gave ground. A second attempt to advance was repulsed in the same manner, when the enemy, who, as yet, had been able to look down resistance by his discipline, advancing steadily in column, was obliged to make an oblique movement to his left, into some open fields, and to display. Here he threw out a brigade of light troops in open order, and advanced in beautiful style, upon the command of Captain Barney, while the head of a strong column was kept in reserve in a copse in its rear. Captain Miller, with the marines, and that portion of the seamen who acted as infantry, met the charge in the most steady and gallant manner, and, after a sharp conflict, drove the British light troops back upon their supporting column. In this conflict, the English commanding officer in advance, Colonel Thornton, with his second and third in rank, Lieutenant Colonel Wood and Major Brown, were all wounded, and left on the field. The marines and seamen manifested the utmost steadiness, though it was afterwards ascertained that the light troops brought up in their front amounted to about six hundred men.

There can be no question that a couple of regular regiments would now have given the Americans the day, but no troops remained in line, except the party under Captain Barney, and two detachments on his right, that were well posted. Having been so roughly handled, the enemy made no attempt to advance directly in front of the seamen and marines, but, after forcing the troops on their right from the field, by a demonstration in that direction, they prepared to turn

the rear of Captain Barney, in order to surround him. While these movements were going on in front, a party of light troops had been thrown out on the enemy's right, and the militia having abandoned the ground, they were also beginning to close upon the Americans that stood. By this time Captain Barney, Captain Miller, and several other officers were wounded; and victory being impossible, against odds so great, an order was given to commence a retreat. The defence had been too obstinate to admit of carrying off the guns, which were necessarily abandoned. All the men retired, with the exception of the badly wounded; among the latter, however, were Captain Barney and Captain Miller, who both fell into the enemy's hands. The loss of the latter, in front of the seamen and marines, on this occasion, was near three hundred men, in killed and wounded. Of the marines nearly one-third were among the casualties; and the flotilla men suffered considerably, though in a smaller proportion.

The people of the flotilla, under the orders of Captain Barney, and the marines, were justly applauded for their excellent conduct on this occasion. No troops could have stood better, and the fire of both artillery and musketry has been described as to the last degree severe. Captain Barney, himself, and Captain Miller, of the marine corps, in particular, gained much additional reputation, and their conspicuous gallantry caused a deep and general regret, that their efforts could not have been sustained by the rest of the army.

As the enemy took possession of Washington, a perfectly defenceless straggling town of some eight or nine thousand inhabitants, that evening, and a con-

siderable force in ships was ascending the Potomac, it was thought necessary to destroy the public property at the navy yard. At that time a frigate, of the first class, called the Columbia, was on the stocks, and the Argus 18, and Lynx 12, had not long been launched. A small quantity of stores and ammunition had been removed, but on the night of the 24th fire was communicated to the remainder. It is difficult to say why the vessels afloat were not scuttled, a measure that would have allowed of their being raised again, as it would have been impossible for the enemy to injure ships in that state, and much less to remove them. Indeed the expediency of setting fire to anything has been questioned, since the enemy could not have done more. It is, however, just to remember that the sudden retreat of the English could not have been foreseen, and that they had a commanding naval force in the Potomac. The loss in vessels was not great; the Columbia 44, on the stocks, and the Argus 18, being the only two destroyed that were of any value. The Lynx escaped, and it would seem that the enemy was in too great a hurry to do her any injury. On this occasion the Boston 28, was burned, though the ship was condemned. The hulk of the New York 36 escaped, but all the naval stores were consumed.

It is worthy of remark, that this, and the instance in which the Adams was burned in the Penobscot, were the only cases in the war in which the enemy, notwithstanding his numerous descents, was ever able to destroy any public cruiser by means of his troops. In this respect the difference between the war of 1812 and that of 1775 is strikingly apparent. During the former contest, indeed, the enemy succeeded in no

assault on any place of size, although, encouraged by his success at Washington, an attempt was shortly after made on Baltimore.

To aid in resisting these descents, which were believed, at the time, to be made by a force greatly exceeding that which was actually employed, the officers and men of the navy, who were in the vicinity, were collected on the shores of the Chesapeake. Com. Rodgers, with the crew of the Guerriere 44, then nearly ready for sea, was withdrawn from Philadelphia; Captain Perry, of the Java 44, which ship was fitting at Baltimore, and Captain Porter, with other gentlemen of the service, had been actively employed on the banks of the Potomac, in endeavouring to intercept the return of the British ships that had ascended to Alexandria, a duty that could not be effected, however, for want of means and time. The guns at command were altogether too light. Some fighting occurred. Several gallant attempts with fire-ships were made, but the enemy's movements were too rapid to allow of the necessary preparations in a country so thinly settled, and almost destitute of military supplies. In the course of this service, Com. Rodgers repelled an attack on a small party of less than fifty men, that was made by the enemy in an attempt to cut off a lighter and a fire-vessel, on which occasion Mr. Newcomb, Mr. Ramage, Mr. Forrest, and Mr. Stockton, of the Guerriere, were conspicuously useful. These gentlemen were also active in endeavouring to fire the enemy's ships, though unsuccessful. Most of these officers, and all their men, were ordered to Baltimore when that town was threatened.

Baltimore was a much more formidable place to assail than Washington, being compact, and contain-

ing, at that time, more than forty thousand souls. Its water defences were respectable, though it had no other fortifications on the side of the land,* than those which were thrown up for the occasion. The seamen, both of the ships of war and of the flotilla, with the marines present, were all under the command of Com. Rodgers, who made a judicious disposition of his force.

The enemy landed early on the 12th of September, near a place called North Point. While this was effecting, the British frigates, sloops, and bomb-vessels, under the command of Captain Nourse of the Severn, proceeded up the Patapsco, with a view to cannonade and bombard the water defences of the town. Vice-Admiral Cochrane and Rear-Admiral Malcolm were with this squadron. A brigade of seamen accompanied the army, under Captain Crofton. With this party Rear-Admiral Cockburn landed in person. The troops, as at Washington, were led by Major-General Ross.

After proceeding about five miles, a small advanced party of the local militia momentarily checked the march of the enemy, falling back, agreeably to orders, when it found itself about to be surrounded. In the trifling skirmish that occurred at this spot, Major-General Ross was killed. A sharper encounter took place shortly after, in which the Americans had about fifteen hundred men engaged. On this occasion the militia had twenty-four men killed and one hundred and

* It may assist the foreigner who reads American history, if he is told that in America there is no fortified town. Defences have been made to resist attacks by sea, and field-works have been occasionally thrown up around different places on emergencies; but no American town, in the old English colonies, was ever regularly walled and fortified.

twenty-nine wounded. They lost also one officer and forty-nine privates, prisoners. According to the accounts of the enemy, he lost, in both affairs, two hundred and ninety in killed and wounded. Shortly after the second skirmish, the English retreated to the place of debarkation, and abandoned the enterprise. The armed citizens of Baltimore and its vicinity composed the force that met the enemy on this occasion.

The attack by water was equally unsuccessful. Fort M'Henry was bombarded for twenty-four hours, without making any serious impression on it. A small battery in advance, manned by officers and men of the flotilla, although much exposed, returned the fire to the last. In the course of the night a strong brigade of boats pushed into the Ferry Branch, and would have gained the harbour, had it not been received by a warm fire from Forts Covington and Babcock, as well as from the barges of the flotilla. The defence was found to be too animated, and the enemy retreated. Fort Covington was manned by eighty seamen of the Guerriere, under Mr. Newcomb, a very excellent young officer of that ship; and Mr. Webster, a sailing master, with fifty men of the flotilla, was in the six-gun battery called Babcock. The barges were under the orders of Lieutenant Rutter, the senior officer present, in that branch of the service. All these gentlemen, and their several commands, distinguished themselves by their steadiness and efficiency.

The barges, in particular, though exposed for nearly a day and a night to the shells and rockets of the enemy, maintained their position with unflinching firmness, and when more closely attacked, repelled the enemy with ease. At a most critical moment,

several vessels were sunk in the channel, which would have completely prevented the enemy from bringing up his heavy ships, had he seen fit to attempt it. The duty was performed with coolness and expedition, by Captain Spence.

This failure virtually terminated the warfare in the Chesapeake, the enemy shortly after collecting most of his forces at the south, with a view to make a still more serious attempt on New Orleans. Small predatory expeditions, however, continued in this quarter, to the close of the war, though they led to no results of sufficient importance to be mentioned. This warfare was generally beneficial to the American government; the excesses into which the enemy were led, whether intentionally or not, having the effect to disgust that portion of the population which had been seriously averse to the conflict; and the administration was probably never stronger than after the wanton destruction of the public buildings at Washington. About this time Captain Barney* was exchanged, and

* Joshua Barney was born in Baltimore, July 6th, 1759. He went to sea young, and by some accidental circumstances was early thrown into the command of a valuable ship. At the commencement of the war of the Revolution, or in October, 1775, he entered on board the Hornet 10, which was fitted at Baltimore, as a master's mate, and sailed in the expedition under Com. Hopkins, against the Bahamas. The Hornet was separated from the squadron by bad weather, and returned to port alone. He next joined the Sachem 10, Captain Alexander, as a lieutenant, though his name is not found on the regular list of the service, until July 20th, 1781, when it appears by the side of those of Dale and Murray. From this fact it is to be inferred that the first commissions regularly received from Congress, by either of those distinguished young sailors, were given at that time. But Mr. Barney served even as a first lieutenant of a frigate at a much earlier day. He was in that station on board the Virginia 28, when taken by the enemy; and he also served in the same rank, on board

he resumed his former command, less than half of his flotilla having been destroyed in the Patuxent.

the Saratoga 16. Mr. Barney escaped the fate of the Saratoga, in consequence of having been in a prize.

After serving in a very gallant manner on board of different vessels of war, as a lieutenant, and in several private cruisers as commander, Mr. Barney was appointed to the Hyder Ally. For the manner in which he received this command, and the brilliant action he fought in that ship, the reader is referred to the text. From the year 1782 to that of 1784, Captain Barney served in the General Washington, (late General Monk,) being most of the time employed as a despatch vessel, or on civil duty of moment. It is not easy to say what was the regular rank of Captain Barney at this period. That he was a lieutenant in the public marine is certain, but it does not so clearly appear that he was appointed to be a captain. Of his claim to this distinction there is no question, though it would seem that the peculiar state of the country prevented this act of justice from being performed. When the General Washington was sold, Captain Barney retired to private life, and, like all his brother officers of the marine of the Revolution, was disbanded.

In 1794, Captain Barney was one of the six captains appointed in the new navy, but he declined taking the commission on account of the name of Captain Talbot preceding his own. In 1796 Captain Barney went to France, and not long after he was induced to enter the French navy, with the rank of *chef de division*. On the 28th of May he sailed from Rochfort for St. Domingo, in l'Harmonie 44, having La Railleuse 36 in company, and under his orders. After cruising some time with these ships, to which a third was subsequently added, he got the command of La Meduse and L'Insurgente, the latter being the frigate that was eventually lost in the American navy. With these two ships he came to America, and was watched for several months by a superior English squadron. The manner in which Com. Barney got to sea, when he was ready to sail, has always been greatly admired. The French frigates dropped down gradually towards the sea, the enemy moving out before them, until the former had anchored just within the capes, and the latter were watching them in the offing. As soon as it became dark, Com. Barney lifted his anchors and stood up the bay, until far enough to be out of sight, when he again brought up. The next morning, missing him, the English supposed he had got to sea in the night, and made sail in chase. Com. Barney, in the mean while, followed his enemies off the coast, altering his course in time to avoid them.

In 1800 Com. Barney quitted the French service, and returned

home. He was engaged in commerce until the war of 1812. The navy by that time had become too regular to allow of his being received into it, and he accepted the command of a privateer. He made only one cruise in this vessel, and in 1813 was put at the head of the flotilla in the Chesapeake, with the rank of a captain in the navy, though not properly in the service. His gallant conduct in that station has been shown. After the war of 1812, he held a civil station under the government, and died in Kentucky, to which state he had removed, December 1st, 1818, in the 59th year of his age. The wound received at Bladensburgh is supposed to have caused his death.

Captain Barney, or Com. Barney, as it was usual to call him, in consequence of his rank in the French service, was a bold enterprising, and highly gallant officer. His combat with the Monk was one of the neatest naval exploits on record; and in all situations he manifested great spirit, and the resources of a man fitted to command. There is little question that he would have been one of the most distinguished officers of the service, had he remained in it; and, as it is, few Americans enjoy a more enviable professional reputation. Captain Barney is said to have been engaged in twenty-six combats, all of which were against the English, and in nearly all of which he was successful.

CHAPTER XXII.

Expedition against New Orleans—Preparations for Defence—Commencement of Hostilities—Gun-boat action—Landing of British troops—Services of the Carolina—Battle of New Orleans—Services of the Navy—Defenders of New Orleans.

THE movements in the Chesapeake were made by a force that was assembled for other and greater objects, to undertake which it only waited for reinforcements. The principal expedition of the year was not commenced until near the close of the season, when Admiral Cochrane, after collecting, in the different islands, a large number of ships of war, transports, and store-vessels, suddenly appeared off the mouth of the Mississippi. This was at the commencement of December, 1814, and there was no doubt, from the first, of a design to make a formidable attempt on the important town of New Orleans, most probably with a view to permanent conquest.

The defences of the place, with the exception of some respectable fortifications that commanded the river, were of a very trifling nature. The latter were formidable, and they rendered it necessary either to

make a descent in some of the bayous, by means of boats, or to destroy the works by bombardment. As the latter required time, which would allow the Americans to assemble a force to resist the invasion, and was of doubtful issue, the former project was adopted. To hazard an attempt of the sort decided on, however, it became necessary to obtain the command of those shallow waters, by which the approach could only be made. To this object, therefore, the enemy first directed his attention.

At the immediate point where New Orleans stands, the Mississippi runs nearly east and west, the site of the place being on the left bank of the river. Directly north of the town, distant but a few miles, lies a large body of shallow water, that is called Lake Ponchartrain, though, in truth, it is merely a bay separated from the waters of the gulf, by a passage so narrow as to resemble a river. This passage is called the Rigolets. Another deep bay that puts in from the gulf, and which is connected with Ponchartrain by means of the Rigolets, is called Lake Borgne, though it deserves the name of a lake still less than the adjoining estuary. Vessels of a light draught can approach near the town by means of these two bodies of water, either by entering Lake Ponchartrain or not, while the ascent of the Mississippi is long, difficult, and extremely crooked. To command the approach by the river, the fortifications just mentioned had been erected, while the government was obliged to rely principally on the navy to furnish a protection for the lakes. The use of steam, at that day, was in its infancy, and the water being too shallow for vessels of any size, no better craft offered for this purpose than the ordinary gun-boats. With this view, a division of these vessels, accompanied by a few light tenders, was

kept in the lakes, and it became necessary to the enemy to destroy this force before he could trust his boats loaded with troops beyond the protection of the guns of his ships.

On the 12th of December, when the enemy's fleet first made its appearance off the entrance of Lake Borgne, a division of five gun-boats was in that bay, under the command of Mr. Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, then a young sea lieutenant. As soon as Mr. Jones was apprized of the appearance of the enemy, he reconnoitered his force, and having ascertained its strength, he retired higher into the bay, with a view to take a position to command the approaches towards the town. There were several small forts, either at the entrance of Lake Ponchartrain, or at the mouth of different bayous, or creeks, that put up into the low swampy grounds below New Orleans, and it was the intention of Mr. Jones to anchor near one of them, at a place called Les Petites Coquilles. His vessels consisted merely of gun-boats; No. 5, commanded by Mr. Ferris, a sailing-master, and mounting five guns, with a crew of thirty-six men; No. 23, Acting-Lieutenant M'Keever, five guns and thirty-nine men; No. 156, Lieutenant-Com. Jones, five guns and forty-one men; No. 162, Acting-Lieutenant Spedden, five guns and thirty-five men; and No. 163, Mr. Ulrick, a sailing master, three guns and twenty-one men; making a united force of twenty-three guns and one hundred and eighty-three men. The metal varied, some of the boats having two long heavy guns, others but one, and all having two or three short lighter pieces. The vessels themselves, like all gun-boats, were low, easy of entrance, slow in their movements, and totally without quarters.

Some movements of the enemy, who appeared with a large flotilla of barges and boats in the bay, induced Mr. Jones to expect an attack, on the 13th, and he got under way from the position he then held, at 3 30 P. M., to attain Les Petites Coquilles, as mentioned. A small tender, called the Sea-horse, had been despatched into the Bay of St. Louis, a short time previously, to destroy some stores, and about four o'clock the enemy sent three boats in after her, to cut her out. The Sea-horse carried one light six pounder, and had but fourteen men. She was commanded by Mr. Johnson, a sailing master. A few discharges of grape drove back the boats, which were soon reinforced, however, by four more, when a spirited little engagement ensued. This was the commencement of actual hostilities, in the celebrated expedition against New Orleans. Mr. Johnson having got a position, where he was sustained by two sixes on the shore, made a handsome resistance, and the barges retired with some loss. A few hours later, however, the Sea-horse and stores were set on fire by the Americans, as it was not possible to prevent them from eventually falling into the hands of a force as formidable as that brought up by the enemy. Not long after, another tender, called the Alligator, armed with a four pounder, and with a crew of only eight men, fell into the hands of the English.

About one A.M., on the 14th, the flotilla, which had been endeavouring to gain a better position, was compelled to anchor in the west end of the passage of Malhereux Island, on account of a failure of wind, and the strength of the current. At daylight the boats of the enemy were seen, having brought up about three leagues to the westward. It was a per-

fect calm, and a strong ebb tide setting through the Pass, no alternative was left Mr. Jones, but to prepare obstinately to defend, or to abandon his vessels. He gallantly determined on the first, although the force that would be brought against him was known to be overwhelming. Arrangements were accordingly made to resist the expected attack to the utmost. It had been the intention to form the five gun-boats with springs on their cables, directly across the channel, in a close line abreast, but the force of the current deranged this plan, Nos. 156 and 163 having been forced about a hundred yards down the Pass, and that much in advance of the three other boats. The approach of the enemy prevented an attempt to repair this great disadvantage, which exposed the vessels mentioned to being assailed while, in a measure, unsupported by their consorts. When the character of the resistance is considered, it appears probable that this accident alone prevented a victory from having been obtained.

The English flotilla consisted of between forty and fifty barges and boats, the former expressly constructed for the purposes of the invasion, and they are said to have mounted forty-two guns, principally carronades of the calibres of twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four pounds. The number of men embarked in these boats has been computed as high as twelve hundred by some accounts, while, by others, it has been put as low as four hundred. The sizes and number of the barges, however, render the latter account improbable, ten men to a boat being altogether too few to gain belief. The truth would be apt to lie between the extremes.

At 10 39 A. M., the enemy raised his grapnels and kedges, and forming in open order, in a line abreast,

he pulled up steadily to the attack. When near enough to be reached by shot, the gun-boats opened a deliberate fire on the approaching barges, though with little effect, as they presented objects too small to be aimed at with any accuracy. At 11 10, however, the enemy opened a fire through his whole line, and the action immediately became general and destructive. At 11 49, the enemy was near enough to make an attempt to board 156, which vessel was much exposed by her advanced position. Three boats dashed at her, but two were sunk, and the attack was repulsed. It was renewed by four boats, which were also beaten off with a heavy loss. In repelling this last attack, however, Mr. Jones was shot down, when the command devolved on Mr. Parker, a young midshipman, who defended his vessel until he was severely wounded himself, and overpowered by numbers. The enemy got possession of No 156 at 12 10, and he immediately turned her guns on the other American boats. No. 163 was next carried, after a very gallant resistance, and No. 162 followed, but not until Mr. Spedden was severely wounded. The twenty-four pounder of No. 5 had been dismounted by the recoil, and the fire of the captured boats having been turned on her, she was also compelled to submit. No. 23, Mr. M'Keever, was the last vessel taken, hauling down her flag about 12 30, when under the fire of the captured boats, and all of the enemy's remaining force. Captain Lockyer, of the Sophie, commanded the English flotilla on this occasion, assisted by Captain Montresor of the Manley, and Captain Roberts of the Meteor.

Although the loss of this division of gun-boats was a serious impediment to the defence of New Orleans, both the country and the service looked upon the

result of the combat as a triumph. On the latter, in particular, the resistance made by Mr. Jones, and the officers and men under his orders, reflected great honour, for it was known to have been made almost without hope. Circumstances compelled the assailed to fight to great disadvantage, and it would seem that they struggled to render their chances more equal by a desperate but cool gallantry. In consequence of the character of this defence, it is usually thought, in the service, to bestow as much credit on an officer to have been present at the defeat of Lake Borgne, as to have been present at a signal victory.

There is the same disagreement in the published accounts of the loss of the British on this occasion, as in the published accounts of their force. It was the opinion of Lieutenant Com. Jones, who was carried on board the enemy's fleet, that their killed and wounded amounted to nearly four hundred, while other prisoners, who, from not having been wounded, had perhaps better opportunities for ascertaining facts of this nature, have never placed it lower than between two and three hundred men. By the official statement of the enemy, as published, his loss was ninety-four. As this was more than half of the number of the Americans engaged, it proves the gallantry of the resistance, but it is believed that the true account was varied for the purposes of effect.* The American loss, though severe, was comparatively trifling.

* The disagreement in official accounts, in matters that will not well admit of mistakes, leaves no choice but to suppose intentional departures from facts somewhere. In the British official account of the battle of New Orleans, (8th January, 1815,) their loss in killed is stated at two hundred and ninety-three. It is well known that the field was left in possession of the Americans, and that they transferred the dead to the English for burial. In his letter

The command of the naval force at New Orleans had been given to Captain Patterson, one of the young officers who had been a prisoner at Tripoli with Captain Bainbridge. Captain Patterson was a master commandant, and he was assisted by many excellent officers, but his force was merely intended to command the river and the shallow waters in the vicinity of the town. A ship called the Louisiana had been purchased and armed with sixteen long twenty-fours. Men were pressed in the streets, for the emergency, under a law of the state, and the command of the vessel was given to Lieutenant C. B. Thompson.

The enemy, finding himself in command of Lake Borgne, by the capture of the gun-boats, sent up a brigade of troops, under Major General Keane, which succeeded in entering a bayou, and in landing but a few miles below the town. Here he encamped, after advancing to some hard ground, on the night of the 23d of December, with his left flank resting on the Mississippi. No sooner was the position of the British known to the Americans, than General Jackson marched against them with all the disposable force he could

of the 9th January, General Jackson says, "upwards of three hundred have already *been delivered over for burial,* and my men are still engaged in picking them up within my lines, and carrying them to the point where the enemy are to receive them." Colonel Hayne, the American Inspector General, under whose orders the dead were given up, on the 13th reports them at seven hundred. The English report their missing at four hundred and seventy-five, and Colonel Hayne reports the prisoners at five hundred and one. A private letter, written on the 13th, says, "in one small spot alone, on the left of our lines, they found three hundred and sixty-eight dead bodies," or seventy-five more than the total loss of the enemy's official account. It was of so much importance to impress the seamen with the idea that the danger of attacking in boats was not great, that we find a motive for the difference in the accounts of the two parties, in the affair of Lake Borgne. It by no means follows that an officer writes what is published.

assemble, making a total of about fifteen hundred men, and by a prompt and spirited night-attack he saved New Orleans. The movements of the troops on this occasion were preceded by Captain Patterson's dropping down abreast of the English bivouac, in the U. S. schooner Carolina 14, and opening a most galling fire. The excellent use made of this little vessel, on the 23d, as well as her continuing to threaten the left flank of the enemy, materially contributed to the general success of the campaign, there being no question that the check received by the English in the action just mentioned, alone prevented him from marching into New Orleans, from which town he was distant only a few miles. It had been intended that the Louisiana should join in this attack, but the ship could not be got ready in time.

A few days later, however, the Carolina was very critically placed. The enemy had landed some guns, and the wind having blown fresh for some time at N. N. W., it had been found impossible to ascend the stream against a current that was even too strong for warping. The armament of the schooner consisted only of twelve pound carronades, and one long gun of the same calibre. On the morning of the 27th the wind being quite light at the northward, the enemy opened upon the Carolina, with hot shot and shells, from a five-gun battery. The cannonade was returned from the long twelve, the only piece that could be used, but the schooner was soon set on fire, beneath her cable tiers, and a little after sunrise Captain Henley was compelled to give orders to abandon her. Before this could be effected seven men were killed and wounded, and the vessel was much injured by shot. Shortly after the crew had got on shore, the Carolina

blew up. During four or five of the most critical days of the campaign this little vessel rendered signal service, and the enemy have always paid a just tribute to the spirit, judgment, and intrepidity with which she was managed. Her behaviour on the night of the 23d reflected great credit on Captain Patterson, and on all under his orders.

The Louisiana was now the only vessel in the river, and she covered the flank of the American lines. On board this ship Captain Patterson repaired, after the loss of the Carolina. On the morning of the 28th an advance of the enemy against the American troops drew a fire from and upon the ship, which was maintained for seven hours. In the course of this long cannonade, the Louisiana threw eight hundred shot among the enemy, though she suffered very little in return.

After the destruction of the Carolina, her officers and people volunteered to man some of the heavy guns that were mounted on the American lines, and they had a share in all the subsequent successes obtained on shore. Captain Patterson also erected a battery on the right bank of the river, which was put under the orders of Captain Henley, and was of material use. On the 8th of January the English made their grand assault, and were defeated with dreadful slaughter. In this extraordinary battle the loss of the enemy was computed at from two to three thousand men, more than two thousand having been killed and wounded. The seamen's battery on the right bank of the river was temporarily abandoned, but the Louisiana was of great use, and the officers and men of the service distinguished themselves by their activity, zeal, and courage. On this occasion Captain Henley was

wounded. One gun, in particular, commanded by Mr. Phillibert, a midshipman, was served in a manner to attract general attention. The Louisiana continued to assist in annoying the enemy until the night of the 18th, when the English retreated to their boats, and embarked, abandoning their attempt altogether.

Captain Patterson immediately despatched several officers in command of expeditions, to intercept and annoy the enemy on their retreat, though the want of a direct communication between the river and the lakes prevented the employment of any vessels larger than boats on this service. Mr. Thomas Shields, a purser, who had previously been a sea-officer in the service, and who had six boats and fifty men under his orders, was sufficiently fortunate to capture one of the enemy's large boats, with forty officers and men of the 14th light dragoons, and fourteen seamen on board. After securing these prisoners, Mr. Shields captured a barge and a transport schooner, and subsequently five other boats, making in all eighty-three more prisoners. Some skirmishing occurred, and Mr. Shields lost one or two of his prizes and prisoners, but he succeeded in bringing in with him seventy-eight of the latter, besides destroying several boats. Mr. Johnson, a sailing master, also performed some service of the same nature with credit, destroying a transport, and capturing a party of men.

In all the important service performed in front of New Orleans, during this short but arduous campaign, the navy had a full share, though its means were necessarily so limited. Captain Patterson, Captain Henley, Lieutenants Jones, Thompson, M'Keever, Spedden, Cunningham, Norris, Crowley, with several sailing masters and midshipmen, distinguished them-

selves on different occasions. The service also witnessed with particular satisfaction the intelligence and spirited conduct of Mr. Shields, an officer who had received his training in its own school. The marine corps had its share, too, in the honour of this glorious campaign, a small detachment of it having acted with its usual good conduct, under the command of Major Carmick, who was wounded in the affair of the 28th of December.

Although it will be exceeding the rigid limits of a strictly nautical work, this chapter cannot be closed without paying a tribute to the gallant band of armed citizens that, in the main, drove the enemy from the shores of Louisiana. The attempt was made under a false impression, which had been industriously circulated in Europe, of an extensive disaffection to the American Union, a delusion that was soon destroyed at the point of the bayonet. It would be difficult to find another instance in history in which a population, deficient in arms, organization, training, and numbers, so signally defeated a powerful force of disciplined troops, accustomed to war, or manifested the same degree of promptitude, unanimity, and spirit in preventing their firesides from being violated by the presence of a licentious soldiery, as was the fact with the defenders of New Orleans.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Events on the different lakes—Naval stations of the English and the Americans — Commencement of hostilities — Commodore Chauncey—Selection of schooners—Preparations on the Upper Lakes—Capture of the Detroit and Caledonian—Commodore Chauncey's flotilla—The Royal George chased—Spirited affair—Events on the lower lake—Attack on the Red House Barracks.

We have now reached a period when it has become proper to advert to events on the different lakes, which were the scenes of some of the most important, as well as of the most interesting incidents of the war. In order to do this, it will be necessary to return to the commencement of hostilities; for the whole of this portion of the subject has been reserved, in order to lay it before the reader in a continued narrative, having no immediate connexion with its other branches.

The English government had long maintained a small naval force on the great lakes; though much the larger portion of Champlain being within the jurisdiction of the United States, it had kept no cruiser on that water. On Lake Ontario, however, there were several vessels, as early as the commencement of the century, one of which was a ship called the Earl of Moira. When the American government

caused the Oneida 16 to be built, that of the Canadas laid down the keel of a ship called the Royal George, which was pierced for twenty-two guns, and which was about one-half larger than the American vessel.

The Oneida was manned and equipped, at the declaration of the war, and was still under the command of Mr. Woolsey, who had built her four years previously. The naval station on the American side of the lake was at Sackett's Harbour, a beautiful and safe basin, not far from the commencement of the St. Lawrence, while that of the British was nearly opposite, at Kingston. The enemy, however, had greatly the advantage in ports, those of the north shore of this lake being generally more commodious and easy of entrance, though probably not as numerous as those of the south. The English also possessed a material advantage over the Americans, in all the warfare of this region of the country, whether on the water, or on the land, in the age and more advanced civilisation, and, consequently, in the greater resources of the settlements on their southern frontier, over those on the northern frontier of the United States. It being a common error to associate the very reverse of this state of things, as settlements recede from the ocean, it may be useful to explain the cause.

The views of the French, when they held the Canadas, extending to a union between these northern provinces, and those they then occupied on the Gulf of Mexico and on the banks of the Mississippi, a line of posts had early been established along the great waters, and around these several spots settlements had been made of course, some of which dated anterior to any of the possessions of the Dutch in New York, or of the English in Pennsylvania. Thus the country in

the immediate vicinity of the Niagara river was as old, in the way of civilisation, as that in the vicinity of the city of New York; and in many respects it had all the appearances and advantages of its antiquity. The same was true of other points on the Canadian frontier. Kingston, which had been called Frontenac by the French, was a town of some size, and it enjoyed the facilities and resources that are produced by time and care. On the American shores of all the great waters, with an immaterial exception at Detroit, the very reverse of this state of things was the case. The settlements were isolated, poor, and recent. Sackett's Harbour was an insignificant hamlet of a dozen houses; Oswego was but little larger, and no other place worthy to be called even a village, then existed on the American side of Lake Ontario. Ogdensburg, much the most important port in all that region, was a new village, about sixty miles down the St. Lawrence, and was of no use as a naval station. In addition to this great disadvantage, the larger lakes were bounded by broad belts of forest, with roads that were always bad, and sometimes nearly impassable. Between the Hudson and the shores of Ontario, a distance of two hundred miles, there existed no other means of communication, at that day, than were offered by the ordinary highways, and an imperfect and interrupted navigation along the waters of the Mohawk, Wood Creek, Oneida Lake, and the rivers that flow from the latter into Lake Ontario. Supplies were consequently obtained with great difficulty, and at an enormous expense. On the other hand, the enemy possessing the outlet of the St. Lawrence, and, in one sense, a command of the ocean, was enabled to convey all the required naval and military stores, from

the warehouses in England, to the dockyards in the Canadas, by water. It will, at once, be understood that, while the scene of the warfare that is about to be related, was apparently at a vast distance from the seat of British power, as to all practical purposes, it was nearer to the resources of that empire than were the naval stations of America to the sea-ports of the republic.

At the time war was declared, England, however, had no officers of her royal marine on the American lakes, while those who belonged to the Oneida, and to the gunboats on Champlain, were regularly trained and bore commissions in the navy of the United States. There is no doubt that this circumstance materially influenced the results of the first acts of hostilities that occurred, the English vessels being conducted by a set of provincial seamen, who had never enjoyed a sufficient opportunity of acquiring the discipline, or of imbibing the spirit of a high-toned service. Still the British vessels, not long before, had been commanded by one who had passed his youth in the English navy, and a few of his inferiors had also possessed limited occasions of learning its practice.

The great superiority of the enemy in force, notwithstanding his known inferiority in discipline and comparative efficiency, prevented Lieutenant Com. Woolsey from inviting hostilities, which were permitted to come from the enemy. On the 19th of July, or about a month after war was declared, five sail were discovered from the fort at Sackett's Harbour, a few leagues in the offing, and shortly after they captured a boat belonging to the custom-house, which they sent in, with a demand that the Oneida should be surrendered to them, as well as a schooner

called the Lord Nelson, that had been captured not long before by the brig. The Oneida now got under way, and ran down to windward of the enemy's squadron, to try her sailing, and, if possible, to pass it, with a view to escape. Finding the latter impracticable, however, Lieutenant Com. Woolsey beat back into the harbour, and anchored his brig close under a bank, where she could rake the entrance. All the guns of her off side were landed and mounted on the shore, presenting a force of sixteen twenty-four pound carronades in battery. On a height that commanded the offing, as well as the entrance, was a small fort; and here a long thirty-two-pounder, that had been originally intended for the Oneida, in her legal character of a gun-boat, was mounted; and the enemy still remaining outside, Mr. Woolsey repaired to the spot, and took charge of the piece in person.

The enemy kept turning to windward, and having got within gun-shot, he opened a slow, irregular, and ill-directed fire on the fort, brig, and batteries. His fire was returned; and, after a cannonade of about two hours, the English vessels bore up, and stood back towards Kingston. This was the commencement of hostilities on the lakes, and it fully proved the incompetency of the officers in charge of the enemy's force, for the duty with which they had been entrusted. The English vessels consisted of the Royal George 22, Prince Regent 16, Earl of Moira 14, Duke of Gloucester, Seneca, and the Simcoe.* On the

* The English changed the names of their vessels in a way to render it very difficult to trace them, or to particularise their force. The Earl of Moira, a ship in 1812, was destroyed, under another name, as a brig in 1814, and had been a schooner in the interval.

part of the Americans, no harm was done; while the enemy is believed to have received some trifling injuries.

It is probable that the government of Canada was itself dissatisfied with the result of this first experiment of its naval forces, for soon after arrangements were made to send officers and men who belonged to the royal navy upon the lakes. It was apparent to both nations, that the command of the inland waters was a great requisite in carrying on the war of the frontiers, and each of the belligerents commenced systematic operations to obtain it. As the enemy was already much the strongest on Ontario, it was incumbent on the American government to take the first measures, and it set about them in earnest, very shortly after the beginning of hostilities. It being evident that the command was one of the most important that had ever been confided to an American officer, great care was necessary in the selection of the individual to whom this highly responsible and arduous duty was to be confided. The choice of the department fell on Captain Isaac Chauncey, then at the head of the New York navy yard; and it was generally admitted by all conversant with his professional character, that a better selection could not have been made. Of tried firmness and spirit, Captain Chauncey was one of the best practical seamen of the age, and his knowledge of ships extended to all those details which would properly come within the scope of his duties. His orders were dated August 31st, 1812, and on the 6th of October he arrived at Sackett's Harbour, in person. As the command of Com. Chauncey extended to all the lakes, with the exception of Champlain, he had employed the time that

intervened between the date of his orders, and that of his arrival on the station, in organizing and despatching the means for creating the necessary force. Forty ship-carpenters left New York on the first week of September, and more followed immediately. Instructions were sent to Mr. Woolsey, to purchase sundry small merchant-vessels; and on the 18th of September, one hundred officers and seamen left New York, for Sackett's Harbour, with guns, shot, stores, &c.

The vessels used by the Americans in the navigation of Lake Ontario were schooners, varying in size from thirty to one hundred tons; and the first measure of Com. Chauncey was to purchase a sufficient number of these craft to obtain the command of the lake, until vessels better fitted for war could be constructed. A selection was accordingly made of several of the most eligible, by Mr. Woolsey, and they were bought, armed, equipped, manned, and put into the service, under the names of the Hamilton, Governor Tompkins, Conquest, Growler, Julia, Pert, &c. &c. Neither of these schooners had the construction or the qualities requisite for vessels of war, but they were the best for the service contemplated that could then be found on those waters. Without quarters, their armaments consisted principally of long guns, mounted on circles, with a few of a lighter description that could be of no material service, except in repelling boarders. The keel of a ship to mount twenty-four thirty-two pound carronades, however, was laid down in September, or before the commanding officer reached the station.

In conjunction with the Oneida, the entire flotilla that could be made immediately available mounted forty guns, and it was manned with four hundred and

thirty men, the marines included. As the armament of the Oneida was just sixteen guns, it follows that there was an average of four guns each among the six other vessels. At this time the enemy was said to possess, on Ontario, the Royal George 22, Earl of Moira 14, both ships; and the schooners, Prince Regent 16, Duke of Gloucester 14, Simcoe 12, and Seneca 4, making a force in guns more than double that of the Americans, with a proportionate disparity in the number of the crews. As cruising vessels, the enemy's squadron possessed an advantage in their size and construction, that greatly increased their superiority.

While these preparations were making on Ontario, the service on the other lakes was not overlooked. Owing to the manner in which the navigation is interrupted by the cataract of Niagara, there is no natural communication between the first of these great bodies of fresh water, and its more western neighbours, nor had any artificial means been attempted at that early day. It was necessary, in consequence, to construct and collect different squadrons, or flotillas, for the different waters, a duty that greatly increased the expense of the preparations, and materially added to the arduous character of the command. As the supplies for the Indian warfare of the north-west, as well as the protection of the right flank of the enemy, depended, in a great measure, on the ability to navigate Erie and the upper lakes, as the contiguous waters are termed, both sides turned their attention early to the means of obtaining an ascendency on the former, which, it was felt, must be the place where the contest was to be decided.

Previously to the war of 1812, there was no vessel on the upper lakes that properly belonged to the

American marine. A brig, called the Adams, however, had been constructed on these waters, for the convenience of the war department, which, under its own officers, had long found it useful in the transportation of stores and military supplies. This vessel had no proper quarters, though insufficient substitutes had been provided; and the peculiar service rendering her, at all times, liable to assaults from the savages of the interior, she had an armament of light guns. By the capture of Michigan, however, the Adams fell into the hands of the enemy, who changed her name to the Detroit, and took her into their service. At this time the enemy possessed two or three other vessels on the upper lakes, and of course this capture, for the moment, gave them complete command of the waters, between the outlet of Lake Erie and the head of Lake Michigan.

With a view to counteract this ascendency, Lieutenant J. D. Elliott was sent to the upper lakes by Com. Chauncey, about the time that the latter officer appeared at Sackett's Harbour, with directions to purchase any suitable vessels that might be found, and to make preparations also for the creation of the necessary force in that quarter. While Mr. Elliott was thus employed, a fortunate concurrence of circumstances put it in the power of this officer to plan a blow at the enemy, of which he availed himself with a spirit and promptitude that were highly creditable. On the morning of the 7th of October, the Detroit came down the lake, in company with another brig called the Caledonia, and anchored under Fort Erie, and that very day intelligence was received that the first party of seamen intended for the lake was within a short march of the Niagara frontier. Orders were

accordingly sent to hasten their arrival, which actually took place about noon of the same day.

Finding that the men were without arms, Mr. Elliott applied to Brigadier-General Smythe, the officer in command of the troops on that frontier, who not only furnished the necessary means but handsomely detailed a command of fifty soldiers to aid in the enterprise, under the orders of Captain Towson of the artillery, who had volunteered for the occasion.

Two of the large boats used in those waters, containing about fifty men each, partly seamen and partly soldiers, were prepared for the service, and they pulled out of Buffalo Creek about one A.M. of the succeeding day. Mr. Elliott commanded one of these boats in person, seconded by Lieutenant Roach of the artillery, while the other was conducted by Mr. Watts, a sailing master, the military command belonging to Captain Towson. The first of the two boats laid the Detroit abroad, and carried her in the handsomest manner, after a short resistance; Lieutenants Elliott and Roach boarding side by side, and heading the party. The rapidity and promptitude of the movement prevented any loss of moment to either side. The Caledonia was also handsomely carried, but not being as accessible as the Detroit, she had more notice of the assault, and was enabled to inflict greater injury on the assailants, though of materially less force. Mr. Elliott reported the Detroit to be armed with six long nines, and to have had a crew of fifty-six men in her. About thirty American prisoners were found in this vessel. The Caledonia had an armament of two guns, and a smaller crew. Ten American prisoners were found in this vessel also.

In executing this duty, the boat under the orders of

Mr. Elliott had one man killed, and Mr. Cummings, an acting midshipman, received a wound from a bayonet. The boat under the direction of Mr. Watts suffered much more, in consequence of the circumstance already mentioned.

The Caledonia was brought successfully over to the American side, but the Detroit met with greater difficulty. Mr. Elliott found himself obliged to drop down the river, passing the forts under a brisk fire, and anchoring within reach of their guns. Here a cannonade took place, during which fruitless efforts were made to get lines to the American shore, in order to warp the brig across. Finding himself assailed by the guns of the enemy's works, as well as by some light artillery, Mr. Elliott determined to cut, and drop out of the reach of the first, believing himself able to resist the last. This plan succeeded in part, but the pilot having left the vessel, she brought up on Squaw Island. The prisoners were now sent on shore, and shortly after Mr. Elliott left her, with a view to obtain assistance. About this time the enemy boarded the prize, but were soon driven out of her by the artillery of Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, the Detroit being commanded equally by the guns on both sides of the Niagara. Under such circumstances, the vessel was effectually removed unfit for service, and in the end, after removing most of her stores, she was burned by the Americans.

This was the first naval success obtained by either nation in the warfare of the lakes, and it was deemed a fortunate commencement for the Americans, on waters where they might hope to contend with their powerful foes, on an equality. The conduct of Mr. Elliott was much applauded, and Congress voted

him a sword. His promptitude and decision were of great service, and it adds to the merit of all engaged, that they thought the Caledonia another brig of a force much superior to what she proved to be when they left the shore. The army had an equal share in the credit of this dashing little enterprise, Captain Towson, who in effect commanded one of the boats, though it was necessarily managed by a sea-officer, having particularly shown spirit and conduct. The names of Lieutenant Roach of the artillery, Ensign Prestman of the infantry, and several volunteers from Buffalo, were also included in the eulogies of the commanding officer.

Not long after this successful exploit, part of the crew of the John Adams 28, which had been laid up at New York, reached Buffalo, to help to man the force government intended to equip on Lake Erie. Mr. Angus, his senior officer, accompanying this party, and there being a want of lieutenants on the other lake, Mr. Elliott now went below to join the vessels immediately under the orders of Com. Chauncey. Before quitting this station, however, this officer had contracted for several schooners that lay in the Niagara, but which it was subsequently found difficult to get into the lake, on account of the enemy's batteries.

Com. Chauncey first appeared on the lake on the 8th of November, with his broad pennant flying on board the Oneida 16, Lieutenant-Com. Woolsey, and having in company the Conquest, Lieutenant Elliott; Hamilton, Lieutenant M'Pherson; Governor Tompkins, Lieutenant Brown; Pert, Mr. Arundel; Julia, Mr. Trant; and Growler, Mr. Mix; the three last named officers holding the rank of sailing masters.

The object in going out was to intercept the return of the enemy's vessels, most of which were known to have been to the westward, to convey supplies to the army at Kingston. In order to effect this purpose, the American squadron, or flotilla—for it scarcely merited the former term—went off the False Ducks, some small islands that lie in the track of vessels keeping the north shore aboard. As the vessels approached the intended station, a ship was made in-shore. She was soon ascertained to be the Royal George, then much the largest vessel that had ever been constructed on the inland waters of America. That a ship of her force should feel it necessary to retire before the Oneida, must be attributed to the circumstance of her not being properly officered, the enemy not having yet made their drafts from the royal navy for the service on the lakes. Com. Chauncey chased the Royal George into the Bay of Quinté, and lost sight of her in the night. The next morning, however, she was seen again, lying in the narrow passage that leads down to Kingston. Signal was immediately made for a general chase, which was vigorously kept up, with alternate squalls and light airs, until the enemy was fairly driven in under the protection of his own batteries.

Although the wind blew directly in, and made a retreat difficult, Com. Chauncey decided to follow the enemy, and feel his means of defence, with an intention of laying the ship aboard, should it be found practicable. Arrangements for that purpose were accordingly made, and a little before three P. M. the vessels that were up, got into their stations, and stood towards the mouth of the harbour. The Conquest, Lieutenant Elliot, led in handsome style, followed by the Julia,

Mr. Trant, Pert, Mr. Arundel, Growler, and Mr. Mix, in the order named. The Oneida brought up the rear, it being intended to give time for the heavy guns of the schooners to open the way for a closer attack by the brig. The Hamilton and Governor Tompkins were a considerable distance astern, having been sent to chase, and did not close for some time.

At five minutes past three, the batteries on India and Navy points opened on the Conquest, but their fire was not returned until seven minutes later. In three minutes after the conquest commenced firing, she was joined by the other three schooners in advance. The gun of the Pert bursted at the third discharge. By this accident, Mr. Arundel, her commander, was badly, and a midshipman and three men were slightly wounded. The vessel was rendered in a great degree useless for the remainder of the day. The Oneida, though under fire for some time previously, did not open with her carronades on the Royal George until forty minutes past three, but when she did commence, the enemy was soon thrown into confusion, and at four P. M. he cut his cables, ran deeper into the bay, and made fast to a wharf, directly under the protection of the muskets of the troops. Here, a part of her people actually deserted her, though they subsequently returned on board. Soon after, the Governor Tomkins, Lieutenant Brown, bore up off the harbour in a beautiful manner, and engaged, having been preceded some time, with equal gallantry, by the Hamilton, Lieutenant M'Pherson. The action became warm and general, and was maintained with spirit for half an hour, the enemy firing from five batteries, the ship, and some moveable guns. It was now so near night, the wind blew so directly in, and the weather looked so

threatening, that the pilots declared their unwillingness to be responsible any longer for the vessels, and Com. Chauncey, who found the enemy much stronger on shore than he had been taught to believe, made the signal for the flotilla to haul off. When an offing of about two miles had been gained, however, the squadron anchored, with an intention to renew the attack in the morning.

In this spirited affair, which partook of the character of the assault on Tripoli, and which was probably inferior to none of the cannonades on that town for gallantry and vigour, after a due allowance is made for the difference in the force employed, the Americans suffered much less than might have been expected. The Oneida had one man killed and three wounded, and she received some damage aloft. The other vessels escaped even better, the audacity of the attack, as is so often the case, producing a sort of impunity. Mr. Arundel, of the Pert, however, who had refused to quit the deck, though badly wounded, was unfortunately knocked overboard and drowned, while the vessel was beating up to her anchorage.

The schooners behaved well on this occasion, creating a high degree of confidence on the part of Com. Chauncey in his officers and men, and a corresponding feeling of respect in the latter towards their commander. The steady manner in which all the vessels beat up to their anchorage, under a brisk fire from the enemy's guns and batteries, was not the least creditable part of their conduct on this occasion. The loss of the English is not known, though it was evident that the Royal George suffered materially. The feebleness of their resistance was probably owing to the audacity of the attack, as they could not have antici-

pated that a force so small would presume to lie off a place amply provided with the means of defence.

On the morning of the 10th there was every appearance of a gale of wind, and the contemplated attack was deferred. At seven A. M. a signal was made to weigh, and the flotilla turned out of a very narrow passage into the open lake under a press of sail, the lateness of the season, and the known character of that tempestuous water, with the appearances of foul weather, rendering the measure prudent. Shortly after getting an offing, the Simcoe was seen and chased into shoal water, under a sharp fire from the Tompkins, Hamilton, and Julia, which cut her up a good deal. She escaped, however, by crossing a reef, though followed into nine feet water, by Mr. M'Pherson, in the Hamilton. It coming on to blow a gale, the pilots refused to remain out any longer, and Com. Chauncey was compelled to return to Sackett's Harbour.

While chasing in the Bay of Quinté, a schooner was captured by the Hamilton, and burned, and as the flotilla ran into Kingston it captured another, off the mouth of the harbour. It was found that this prize could not turn out of the passage next morning with the other vessels, and the Growler, Mr. Mix, was directed to run down past the port with her, with a view to come up on the other side of the island, and with the hope that the appearance of these two vessels might induce the Royal George to come out in chase. The latter project failed, but the Growler got safe into Sackett's Harbour on the 13th, with this and another prize, a sloop, having on board a brother of the late General Brock.

Intelligence having reached Com. Chauncey that the

Earl of Moira was off the Ducks, he sailed the same day with the Oneida, in a snow storm, to capture her; but the enemy was too much on the alert to be caught by surprise, and the distances on the lake were too short to admit of his being easily overtaken in chase. The Oneida saw the Royal George and two schooners, but even these three vessels were not disposed to engage the American brig singly. The two schooners, in company with the Royal George on this occasion, were supposed to be the Prince Regent and the Duke of Gloucester. Com. Chauncey then went off Oswego to cover some stores expected by water. During this short cruise the Oneida narrowly escaped shipwreck, and the ice made so fast that it would have been impossible to work the carronades, had there been a necessity for it. The Conquest, Tompkins, Growler, and Hamilton, notwithstanding, continued to cruise off Kingston until the 17th of November. On the 19th the Commodore attempted to go to the head of the lake, but was driven back by a gale, during which so much ice was made as to endanger the vessels. The Growler was dismasted. Early in December the navigation closed for the season.

While these events were occurring on the lower lake, the navy was not altogether unemployed on the upper waters, although, as yet, not a single vessel had been equipped. A small body of troops had been collected at Buffalo, under Brigadier-General Smythe, and it was generally understood that it was the intention of that officer to make a descent on the Canada shore, as soon as a competent force was prepared. Towards the close of November, it was believed that the arrangements were in a sufficient degree of forwardness to admit of an attempt to drive the enemy

from the batteries that lined the opposite shore, in order to clear the way for the landing of the brigade. To aid it in executing this important service, the army naturally turned its eyes for professional assistance towards the body of seamen collected at this point.

The men of the John Adams had encamped in the woods near the river, and finding the enemy in the practice of cannonading across the Niagara, shortly after their arrival, they drove into the wreck of the Detroit at night, made fast to, and succeeded in raising four of that vessel's guns, with a large quantity of shot. These pieces were mounted in battery, and a desultory cannonading was maintained by both parties until the arrival of some heavy guns from the seaboard, when the Americans got a force in battery that enabled them completely to maintain their ground against their adversaries. In this manner more than a month had passed, when the application was made to Mr. Angus for some officers and seamen to assist in carrying and silencing the batteries opposite, in order to favour the intended descent. The arrangements were soon completed, and the morning of the 28th of November was chosen for the undertaking.

The contemplated attack having separate points in view, the expedition was divided into two parties. One, commanded by Captain King, of the 15th infantry, was directed to ascend the current a little, in order to reach its point of attack, while the other was instructed to descend it in about an equal proportion. The first being much the most arduous at the oars, the seamen were wanted especially for this service. Mr. Angus accordingly embarked in ten boats, with seventy men, exclusive of officers, and accompanied by Captain King, at the head of a detachment of one hun-

dred and fifty soldiers. With this party went Mr. Samuel Swartout of New York, as a volunteer. Lieutenant Colonel Boerstler commanded ten more boats, which conveyed the detachment about two hundred strong, that was to descend with the current.

The division containing the seamen left the American shore first, about one A. M., with muffled oars, and pulled deliberately, and in beautiful order, into the stream. That the enemy was ready to meet them is certain, and it is probable he was aware of an intention to cross that very night. Still all was quiet on the Canada side, until the boats had passed out of the shadows of the forest into a stronger light, when they were met with a discharge of musketry, and a fire of two field-pieces, that were placed in front of some barracks known by the name of the Red House. The effect of this reception was to produce a little confusion and disorder, and some of the officers and a good many men being killed or wounded, all the boats did not gain the shore. Those in which efficient officers remained, however, dashed in, in the handsomest manner, and the seamen in them landed in an instant. A body of the enemy had formed in front of the barracks, with their left flank covered by the two guns. As soon as the troops could be formed, the enemy's fire was returned, and a short conflict occurred. At this juncture a small party of seamen armed with pikes and pistols, headed by Mr. Watts, a sailing master, and Mr. Holdup, made a détour round the foot of the hill, and charging the artillerists, took the guns in the most gallant manner, mortally wounding and capturing Lieutenant King, who commanded them. At the same instant the remaining seamen and the troops

charged in front, when the enemy broke and took refuge in the barracks.

The enemy's fire was now very destructive, and it became indispensable to dislodge him. Several spirited young midshipmen were with the party, and three of them, Messrs. Wragg, Holdup, and Dudley, with a few men, succeeded in bursting open a window, through which they made an entrance. This gallant little party unbarred an outer door, when Mr. Angus and the seamen rushed in. In an instant they set fire to the straw on which the soldiers slept, and the barracks were immediately wrapt in flames. The enemy, a party of grenadiers, was on the upper floor, and finding it necessary to retreat, he made a vigorous charge, and escaped by the rear of the building. Here he rallied, and was charged by Captain King, who had formed outside.

The party of seamen and soldiers now got separated, in consequence of an order having been given to retreat, though it is not known from what quarter it proceeded; and a portion of both the seamen and the soldiers fell back upon the boats, and re-embarked. Mr. Angus, finding every effort to stop this retreat useless, retired with his men. But Captain King, with a party of the troops, still remained engaged, and with him were a few seamen, with Messrs. Wragg, Dudley, and Holdup, at their head. These young officers fell in with the soldiers; and a charge being ordered, the enemy again broke and fled into a battery. He was followed, and was driven from place to place, until, entirely routed, he left Captain King in complete command of all the batteries at that point.

Believing that their part of the duty was performed,

the young sea-officers who had remained now retired to the shore, and crossed to the American side, in the best manner they could. Most of the seamen, who were not killed, got back by means of their professional knowledge; but Captain King and several officers of the army, with sixty men, fell into the enemy's hands, in consequence of not having the means of retreat. The attack of Colonel Boerstler succeeded in a great degree, and his party was brought off.

Although this affair appears to have been very confused, the fighting was of the most desperate character. The impression made by the seamen with their pikes was long remembered, and their loss was equal to their gallantry. The enemy was effectually beaten, and nothing but a misunderstanding, which is said to have grown out of the fact that the boats which did not come ashore at all were supposed to have landed and then retreated, prevented the attack from being completely successful. Still the batteries were carried, guns spiked, barracks burned, and caissons destroyed.

Owing to the nature of the service, and the great steadiness of the enemy, who behaved extremely well, this struggle was exceedingly sanguinary. Of twelve sea-officers engaged, eight were wounded, two of them mortally. The entire loss of the party was about thirty in killed and wounded, which was quite half of all who landed, though some were hurt who did not reach the shore. The troops behaved in the most gallant manner also, and many of their officers were wounded. Both Mr. Angus and Captain King gained great credit for their intrepidity.*

* Mr. Angus, the only commissioned sea-officer present, was also hurt by a severe blow on the head from the butt of a musket, though not reported among the wounded. Messrs. Sisson and Watts,

As none of the great lakes are safe to navigate in December, this closed the naval warfare for the year, though both nations prepared to turn the winter months to the best account, during the period while the coasts were icebound.

sailing masters, died of their wounds. Mr. Carter, another master, was wounded. Of the midshipmen, Mr. Wragg, since dead, was wounded in the abdomen by a bayonet; Mr. Graham, now Commander Graham, lost a leg; Mr. Holdup, now Captain Holdup-Stevens, was shot through the hand; Mr. Brailesford, since dead, was shot through the leg, and Mr. Mervine, now Commander Mervine, received a musket-ball in the side. Mr. Dudley, since dead, went through the whole affair unhurt, though much exposed.

Messrs. Dudley, Holdup, and Wragg, remained in Canada to the close of the fighting. These three young gentlemen, neither of whom was yet twenty, met at the water side about daybreak, and got into a leaky canoe, which Mr. Dudley brought out of a creek. The latter made two paddles of rails by means of a battle-axe, and taking in three wounded seamen, and two that were unhurt, they put off from the English shore. Notwithstanding they bailed with their hats, the canoe sunk under them, close to Squaw Island. Here they dragged their wounded men ashore, got the canoe emptied, hauled her round to the American side, and made a fresh effort to cross, in which they succeeded, though the canoe was nearly filled again before they reached the shore. One of the wounded men died just as the party landed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Increase of the American force in small schooners—Launch of the Madison—Appointment of Captain Sir J. L. Yeo to command the English force on the Lakes—Attack on York (now Toronto) proposed—Preparations for constructing a force on Lake Erie—Men embarked in the American squadron—Landing of the brigade under General Pike—Capture of York—Preparations for a descent on Fort George—The town and fort taken—Services of the naval force on that occasion—Zeal and ability of Captain Perry.

Both parties employed the winter of 1812-13, in building. In the course of the autumn the Americans had increased their force to eleven sail, ten of which were the small schooners bought from the merchants, and fitted with gun-boat armaments without quarters. In addition to the vessels already named, were the Ontario, Scourge, Fair American, and Asp. Neither of the ten was fit to cruise; and an ordinary eighteen-gun brig ought to have been able to cope with them all, in a good working breeze, at close quarters. At long shot, however, and in smooth water, they were not without a certain efficiency. As was proved in the end, in attacking batteries, and in covering descents, they were even found to be exceedingly serviceable.

On the 26th of November, the new ship was launched at Sackett's Harbour, and was called the Madison. She was pierced for twenty-four guns, and her metal was composed of thirty-two pound carronades, rendering her a little superior to the Royal

George. Nine weeks before this ship was put into the water, her timber was growing in the forest. This unusual expedition, under so many unfavourable circumstances, is to be ascribed to the excellent dispositions of the commanding officer, and to the clear head and extraordinary resources of Mr. Henry Eckford, the builder employed, whose professional qualities proved to be of the highest order.

On the other hand, the enemy laid the keel of a ship a little larger than the Madison, which would have effectually secured the command of the lake, notwithstanding the launching of the latter, as their small vessels were altogether superior to those of the Americans; and the Royal George was perhaps strong enough to engage two brigs of the force of the Oneida. It became necessary, therefore, to lay down a new ship at Sackett's Harbour, and for this purpose a fresh gang of ship-wrights went up in February.

About this time the enemy made choice of Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo, to command on the American lakes. This officer had lately been wrecked in the Southampton 32, and possessed a high reputation for spirit and conduct. So much importance was attached to the control of these waters, that great care was had in the selection of the officers who were to command on them. So sensible were both belligerents, indeed, of the necessity of struggling for the superiority, that each side appeared to anticipate an attack in the course of the winter, and it is known that one was actually meditated on the part of the Americans.

In the month of March, however, Com. Chauncey proposed to the government an attack on York, (now Toronto,) instead of the one that had been contem-

plated on Kingston, giving such forcible reasons for changing the plan, that his advice was followed. It appears that the enemy had committed the fault of using two different ports of building, by which mistake he necessarily exposed himself to the risks of an attack against divided means of defence. As it might give the command of the lake, for some months at least, to destroy a single vessel of any size, the wisdom of the plan proposed by the American naval commander will be seen at a glance.

In the mean time preparations were made for constructing a force on Lake Erie, two brigs having been laid down at Presque Isle, (now Erie,) during the month of March. But the fact that nearly the whole of the American side of this frontier was scarcely more than a wilderness, as well as that many of the roads which existed were little better than passages among marked trees, and during the spring and autumn were nearly impassable, rendered all the provisions of the government exceedingly difficult to execute, and greatly retarded the preparations. To add to the embarrassments, it was found that men transported from the sea-coast to those of the lakes were liable to contract a debilitating fever, more especially when exposed as those necessarily were, who had no regular dwellings to receive them.

Fresh parties of seamen began to arrive at Kingston in March, where the new ship was fast getting ready.

On the 6th of April Mr. Eckford put into the water, on the American side, a beautiful little pilot-boat schooner, that was intended for a look-out and despatch vessel. She was armed with merely one long brass nine on a pivot, and was called the Lady of the Lake.

two days later, the keel of a new ship was laid, that was considerably larger than the Madison.

About the middle of the month, the lake was considered safe to navigate, and on the 19th the squadron was reported ready for active service. On the 22nd, accordingly, General Dearborn caused a body of seventeen hundred men to be embarked in the different vessels; and on the 24th, owing to the impatience of the army, which suffered much by being crowded into small vessels, an attempt was made to get out. The commodore, however, agreeably to his own expectations, was obliged to return, it blowing a gale. These few days had a very injurious effect on the health of both branches of the service, as there was not sufficient room for the men to remain below, and on deck they were exposed to the inclemency of the season. The Madison alone, a mere sloop of war, had six hundred souls in her, including her own people. On the 25th, however, the squadron, consisting of the Madison, Lieutenant-Com. Elliott, Com. Chauncey; Oneida, Lieutenant-Com. Woolsey; Fair American, Lieutenant Chauncey; Hamilton, Lieutenant M'Pherson; Governor Tompkins, Lieutenant Brown; Conquest, Lieutenant Pettigrew; Asp, Lieutenant Smith; Pert, Lieutenant Adams; Julia, Mr. Trant; Growler, Mr. Mix; Ontario, Mr. Stevens; Sourge, Mr. Osgood; Lady of the Lake, Mr. Flinn; and Raven, transport, got out, and it arrived off York on the morning of the 25th, without loss of any sort. All the vessels ran in and anchored about a mile from the shore, to the southward and westward of the principal fort.

Great steadiness and promptitude were displayed,

in effecting a landing. The wind was blowing fresh from the eastward, but the boats were hoisted out, manned, and received the troops, with so much order, that in two hours from the commencement of the disembarkation, the whole brigade was on shore, under the command of Brigadier-General Pike. The wind drove the boats to leeward of the place that had been selected for the landing, which was a clear field, to a point where the Indians and sharpshooters of the enemy had a cover; but the advance party was thrown ashore with great gallantry, and it soon cleared the bank and thickets, with a loss of about forty men. This movement was covered by a rapid discharge of grape from the vessels. As soon as a sufficient number of troops had got ashore, they were formed by General Pike in person, who moved on to the assault. The small vessls now beat up, under a brisk fire from the fort and batteries, until they had got within six hundred yards of the principal work, when they opened with effect on the enemy, and contributed largely to the success of the day. The commodore directed the movements in person, pulling-in in his gig, and encouraging his officers by the coolness with which he moved about under the enemy's fire. There never was a disembarkation more successfully or more spiritedly made, considering the state of the weather, and the limited means of the assailants. In effecting this service, the squadron had two midshipmen slain, and fifteen men killed and wounded, mostly while employed in the boats. After sustaining some loss by an explosion that killed Brigadier-General Pike, the troops so far carried the place that it capitulated. It remained in peaceable possession of the Americans

until the 1st of May, when it was evacuated, to proceed on other duty.

The capture of York was attended with many important results, that fully established the wisdom of the enterprise. Although the Prince Regent, the third vessel of the enemy, escaped, by having sailed on the 24th for Kingston, the Duke of Gloucester, which had been undergoing repairs, fell into the hands of the Americans. A vessel of twenty guns, that was nearly finished, was burnt, and a large amount of naval and military stores was also destroyed. A very considerable quantity of the latter, however, was saved, shipped, and sent to Sackett's Harbour. Many boats that had been built for the transportation of troops were also taken. In the entire management of this handsome exploit, the different vessels appear to have been well conducted, and they contributed largely to the complete success which crowned the enterprise.

Although the brigade re-embarked on the 1st of May, the squadron was detained at York until the 8th by a heavy adverse gale of wind. The men were kept much on deck for more than a week, and the exposure produced many cases of fever, in both branches of the service. More than a hundred of the sailors were reported ill with the fever; and the brigade, which had lost two hundred and sixty-nine men in the attack, the wounded included, was now reduced, by disease, to about one thousand effectives. As soon as the weather permitted, the commanding naval and army officers crossed in the Lady of the Lake, and selected a place for an encampment about four miles to the eastward of Fort Niagara, when the vessels immediately followed and disembarked the troops.

As soon as released from this great incumbrance on his movements, Com. Chauncey sailed for the harbour, with a view to obtain supplies, and to bring up reinforcements for the army. A few of the schooners remained near the head of the lake, but the greater part of the squadron went below, where it arrived on the 11th. The small vessels were now employed in conveying stores and troops to the division under General Dearborn, which was reinforcing fast by arrivals from different directions.

On the 15th of this month the enemy had advanced so far with his new ship, which was called the Wolfe, as to have got in her lower masts, and expedition became necessary, an action for the command of the lake being expected as soon as this vessel was ready to come out. On the 16th one hundred men were sent to the upper lakes, where Captain Perry, then a young master and commander, had been ordered to assume the command some months previously. On the 22nd the Madison, with the commodore's pennant still flying in her, embarked three hundred and fifty troops, and sailed for the camp to the eastward of the mouth of the Niagara, where she arrived and disembarked the men on the 25th. The Fair American, Lieutenant Chauncey, and Pert, Acting-Lieutenant Adams, were immediately ordered down to watch the movements of the enemy at Kingston, and preparations were made, without delay, for a descent on Fort George. On the 26th Com. Chauncey reconnoitred the enemy's coast and his position, and that night he sounded his shore, in person, laying buoys for the government of the movements of the small vessels which it was intended to send close in. The weather being more favourable, the Madison, Oneida, and

Lady of the Lake, which could be of no use in the meditated attack, on account of their armaments, received on board all the heavy artillery of the army, and as many troops as they could carry, while the rest of the soldiers embarked in boats.

At three A. M., on the 27th of May, the signal was made to weigh, and the army having all previously embarked, at four the squadron stood towards the Niagara. As the vessels approached the point of disembarkation, the wind so far failed as to compel the small vessels to employ their sweeps. The Growler, Mr. Mix, and Julia, Mr. Trant, swept into the mouth of the river, and opened on a battery near the light-house. The Ontario, Mr. Stevens, anchored more to the northward to cross their fire. The Hamilton, Lieutenant M'Pherson, the Asp, Lieutenant Smith, and the Scourge, Mr. Osgood, were directed to stand close in to cover the landing, and to scour the woods, or any point where the enemy might show himself, with grape-shot; while the Governor Tompkins, Lieutenant Brown, and Conquest, Lieutenant Pettigrew, were sent farther to the westward to attack a battery that mounted one heavy gun.

Captain Perry had come down from the upper lake on the evening of the 25th, and on this occasion was the sea-officer, second in rank, present. Com. Chauncey confided to him the duty of attending to the disembarkation of the troops. The marines of the squadron were embodied with the regiment of Colonel M'Comb, and four hundred seamen were held in reserve, to land, if necessary, under the immediate orders of the commodore in person.

When all was ready, the schooners swept into their stations in the handsomest manner, opening their fire

with effect. The boats that contained the advance party, under Colonel Scott, were soon in motion, taking a direction towards the battery near Two Mile Creek, against which the Governor Tompkins and Conquest had been ordered to proceed. The admirable manner in which the first of these two little vessels was conducted, drew the applause of all who witnessed it on Mr. Brown and his people. This officer swept into his station, under fire, in the steadiest manner, anchored, furled his sails, cleared his decks, and prepared to engage, with as much coolness and method, as if coming-to in a friendly port. He then opened with his long gun, with a precision that, in about ten minutes, literally drove the enemy from the battery, leaving the place to his dead. The boats dashed in under Captain Perry, and Colonel Scott effected a landing with the steadiness and gallantry for which that officer is so distinguished. The enemy had concealed a strong party in a ravine, and he advanced to repel the boats, but the grape and canister of the schooners, and the steady conduct of the troops, soon drove him back. The moment the command of Colonel Scott got ashore, the success of the day was assured. He was sustained by the remainder of the brigade to which he belonged, then commanded by Brigadier-General Boyd, and after a short but sharp conflict the enemy was driven from the field. The landing was made about nine A.M., and by twelve M. the town and fort were in quiet possession of the Americans, the British blowing up and evacuating the latter, and retreating towards Queenston.

In this handsome affair, in which the duty of the vessels was performed with coolness and method, the navy had but one man killed and two wounded. So

spirited, indeed, was the manner in which the whole duty was conducted, that the assailants generally suffered much less than the assailed, a circumstance that is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the good conduct of the covering vessels. General Dearborn reported his loss, on this occasion, at only seventeen killed and forty-five wounded, while he puts that of the enemy at ninety killed and one hundred and sixty wounded, most of whom were regular troops. One hundred prisoners were also made.

Both the commanding general and the commanding sea-officer spoke in the highest terms of the conduct of the naval force employed in the descent on Fort George. General Dearborn admitted the extent of his obligations to Com. Chauncey for the excellent dispositions he had made for landing the troops, always a service of delicacy and hazard, and his judicious arrangements for silencing the batteries, under the fire of which it was necessary to approach the shore. The trifling amount of the loss is the best evidence how much these thanks were merited. Com. Chauncey himself commended all under his orders, though he felt it due to their especial services, particularly to mention Captain Perry and Lieutenant M'Pherson. Lieutenant Brown, of the Governor Tompkins, was signally distinguished, though his name, from some accident, was omitted in the despatches.

The occupation of Fort George brought with it an evacuation by the British of the whole Niagara frontier. Lieutenant-Colonel Preston took possession of Fort Erie on the evening of the 28th, and the entire river, for the moment, was left at the command of the Americans. By this success the squadron obtained the temporary use of another port, Com. Chauncey

running into the Niagara and anchoring on the afternoon of the 27th. Captain Perry was immediately despatched above the falls, with a small party of seamen, to carry up five vessels that had been purchased or captured, and which it had not been practicable, hitherto, to get past the enemy's batteries. This duty was performed by Captain Perry during the first days of June, though not without infinite labour, as he was obliged to track the different vessels by the laid of oxen, every inch of the way, against the strong current of the Niagara, a party of soldiers lending their assistance. By the close of the month this zealous officer had got them all across the lake to Presque Isle, where the two brigs, laid down early in the spring, were launched in the course of the month of May, though their equipment proceeded very slowly, from the state of the roads and a want of men.

CHAPTER XXV.

Unsuccessful expedition by the English against Sackett's Harbour —Launch of the General Pike—Promotion of officers—Loss of the Eagle and Growler—Captain M'Donough appointed to the command of Lake Champlain—Capture of the Lady Murray—Dislike of the American sailors to the lake service—Intended attack on the American squadron—Descent on York—Appearance of the enemy's squadron—Fatal squall—Unsuccessful manœuvres to close with the enemy—Commodore Chauncey's order of battle—The action—Loss of two American schooners —Retreat of the American squadron.

WHILE these important movements were in the course of execution near the western end of the lake, others of equal magnitude were attempted near its eastern. The descent on Fort George took place on the 27th of May, and almost at the same moment Sir George Prevost, the British commander-in-chief, and Com. Sir J. L. Yeo, meditated a *coup de main* against Sackett's Harbour, in revenge for the blow they had received at York. By destroying the new ship, Com. Yeo would most probably secure a superiority on the lake for the remainder of the season, the Americans having no other cruising vessel but the Madison fit to lie against the Wolfe or Royal George.

On the morning of the 28th of May, the Wolfe, Royal George, Moira, Prince Regent, Simcoe, and Seneca, with two gun-boats, and a strong brigade of barges and flat-bottomed boats, appeared off Sackett's Harbour. When about two leagues from the shore, a considerable party of troops was placed in the boats, and the whole squadron bore up with an intention to land; but their attention was diverted by the appearance, to the westward, of a brigade containing nineteen boats, which were transporting troops to the harbour. The enemy immediately sent his own barges in pursuit, and succeeded in driving twelve boats on shore, and in capturing them, though not until they had been abandoned by the Americans. The remaining seven got into the harbour. Hoping to intercept another party, the enemy now hauled to the westward, and sent his boats ahead to lie in wait, and the intention to disembark that afternoon was abandoned.

As the day dawned, on the morning of the 29th, a strong division of barges, filled with troops, and covered by the gun-boats, was seen advancing upon Horse Island, a peninsula at a short distance from the village of Sackett's Harbour. A body of about eight hundred men effected a landing, accompanied by Sir George Prevost in person, and an irregular and desultory, but spirited engagement took place. At first, the enemy drove all before him, and he advanced quite near the town, but being met by a detachment of regulars, he was driven back with loss, and compelled to abandon his enterprise.

In this affair, had the enemy's vessels done as good service as the American vessels performed near the Niagara, the result might have been different; but,

though some of them swept up pretty near the shore; they were of no assistance to the troops. Unfortunately, false information was given to the sea-officer in charge of the store-houses, and he set fire to them, by which mistake, not only most of the stores taken at York, but many that had come from the sea-board, were consumed. But for this accident, the enemy would have had no consolation for his defeat.

Information reached Com. Chauncey on the 30th of May that the enemy was out, and he immediately got under way from the Niagara, looked into York, then ran off Kingston, but falling in with nothing, he crossed to the Harbour, where he anchored; being satisfied that the English squadron had returned to port.

Every exertion was now made to get the new ship afloat, Com. Chauncey rightly thinking he should not be justified in venturing an action with his present force. Although he had fourteen sail of vessels, which mounted altogether eighty-two guns, but two had quarters, or were at all suited to close action. As both the Madison and Oneida had been constructed for a very light draught of water, neither was weatherly, though the former acquitted herself respectably; but the latter was dull on all tacks, and, what might not have been expected from her construction, particularly so before the wind. The schooners were borne down with metal, and could be of no great service except at long shot. On the other hand, all the enemy's vessels had quarters, most of them drew more water, relatively, and held a better wind than the Americans, and as a whole they were believed to mount about the same number of guns. In the way of the metal

the English large ships were decidedly superior to the two largest American vessels, mounting some sixty-eight pound carronades among their other guns.

The keel of the new ship had been laid on the 9th of April, and she was got into the water June 12th, notwithstanding Mr. Eckford had been compelled to take off his carpenters to make some alterations on the vessels in the Niagara. This ship was a large corvette, and was pierced for twenty-six guns, long twenty-fours, and she mounted two more on circles; one on a top gallant forecastle, and the other on the poop. The day before the launch, Captain Sinclair arrived and was appointed to this vessel, which was called the General Pike. Lieutenant Trenchard, who arrived at the same time, received the command of the Madison. About this time, a considerable promotion occurred in the navy, by means of which Captain Sinclair was posted. Mr. Woolsey, Mr. Trenchard and Mr. Elliott, all of whom served on the lakes, were raised to the rank of masters and commanders, though several weeks elapsed before the commissions were received. Messrs. Holdup, Dudley, Packett, Yarnall, Wragg, Adams, Pearce, Edwards, Jones, Conklin, and Smith, gentlemen who had also been detached for this service, and most of whom had been acting, were regularly raised to the rank of lieutenants. It was, however, a just cause of complaint with all the commanders on the different lakes, that so few officers of experience were sent to serve under them. Most of the gentlemen just named had been to sea but four or five years, and they were generally as young in years as they were in experience. That they subsequently acquitted them-

selves well, is owing to the high tone of the service to which they belonged.*

Although the Pike was so near completion, there were neither officers nor men for her on the station; and the canvass intended for her sails had been principally burned during the late attack on the Harbour. At this time, moreover, while the service pressed, but one hundred and twenty men had been sent on Lake Erie, Com. Chauncey having entertained hopes of being able to reinforce that station from below, after defeating the enemy.

Lake Champlain had attracted but little of the attention of either of the belligerents until this summer, as it did not come in the line of military operations of the day. Some small vessels, however, had been fitted out on each side of the frontier, and on the 3rd of June, Lieutenant Sidney Smith, who then commanded on the lake, ventured down into the narrow part of that water, with two armed sloops called the Eagle and the Growler, where he was completely exposed to the fire of musketry from a body of troops on the land. It appears that the Eagle sunk, her

* It will be a subject of melancholy interest to note the fortunes of the first promotions of 1813. Captains Tarbell and Sinclair—both dead. Masters-commandant—Warrington, M'Donough, (4) Ridgeley, Angus, Blakely, (2) Allen, (3) Woolsey, (4) Spence, (4) Creighton, (4) Trenchard, (4). Downes, Parker, (4) Patterson, Henley, (4) Elliot. Lieutenants—Allen, (3) M'Knight, (2) Conner, Gallagher, Holdup, Bullus, (4) Dudley, (4) Oellers, Hunter, Sloat, Packett, (4) Cocke, (3) Yarnall, (2) Perry, Skinner, Wragg, (4) Saunders, (4) Reilly, (2) Adams, (4) Cox, Madison, (2) Taylor, (4) Pearce, (4) Smith, (4) Newcombe, (2) Nicholson, (4) Tillinghast, (2) Edwards, (4) Norris, (2) Newton, Jones, Henley, (4) Conklin, Smith, (4) Beatty, (4) Rousseau, Storer, Stansbury, (4) Hamilton, (3) Rapp, (4) German, (4) Cassin, (4) Rose, (4) and Kennon.

(4) *Dead.* (2) *Lost at sea.* (3) *Killed.*

seams having opened by the discharges of her guns, and the Growler was compelled to strike, the wind being fresh at south, rendering a retreat impossible. On this occasion near a hundred prisoners were made by the enemy, a considerable portion of whom were volunteers from the army.

After this loss, the government turned its attention towards the construction of a naval force on that lake, but its movements were slow, the state of the warfare not appearing to require much exertion in that quarter. After the capture of Mr. Smith, however, Lieutenant Thomas M'Donough, an officer who had distinguished himself as the associate of Decatur in his chivalrous exploits before Tripoli, was detached for this service, and appointed to the command of the lake. Shortly after, Mr. M'Donough was raised to the rank of a master and commander, but so few men were attached to this station, that when this gallant officer first reached it, and even for some time afterwards, he actually worked with his own hands, strapping blocks, and performing other similar duties, in order to prepare some small vessels for service. An inroad made by the enemy, about this time, a little quickened the efforts of the government, however; for on the 1st of August, Captain Everard, of the British navy, at the head of a force consisting of the two captured sloops, three gun-boats, and several batteaux, made an incursion as far as Plattsburgh, where he destroyed a considerable amount of stores. He also captured several small trading vessels before he returned. As Captain M'Donough had no force equal to resisting such inroads, exertions were made to equip one that should prevent their repetition, for, in consequence of the territorial division of this lake, its

warfare, on the part of the Americans, was principally defensive.

In the mean time the efforts on Ontario continued. One of the small vessels was constantly kept cruising between the Ducks and Kingston, to watch the enemy, it being known that he was now much superior in force. Early in June, the British squadron went up the lake, most probably to transport troops, quitting port in the night; but Com. Chauncey very properly decided that the important interests confided to his discretion required that he should not follow it, until his squadron was reinforced by the accession of the Pike, to get which vessel ready, every possible exertion was making.

On the 14th of June, the Lady of the Lake, Lieutenant W. Chauncey, left the Harbour to cruise off Presque Isle, to intercept the stores of the enemy; and on the 16th, she captured the schooner Lady Murray, loaded with provisions, shot, and fixed ammunition. This vessel was in charge of an ensign and fifteen men, the prisoners amounting, in all, to twenty-one. Mr. Chauncey carried his prize into the Harbour on the 18th, passing quite near the enemy's squadron. The prisoners reported the launch of a new brig at Kingston.

About this time, the enemy's squadron, consisting of the Wolfe, Royal George, Moira, Melville, Beresford, Sidney Smith, and one or two gun-boats, appeared off Oswego. Preparations were made to disembark a party of troops, but the weather becoming threatening, Sir James Yeo was induced to defer the descent, and stood to the westward. He then went off the Genesee, where some provisions were seized and carried off, and a descent was made at Great Sodus,

with a similar object, but which failed, though several buildings were burned, and some flour was carried away. Shortly before, he had appeared off the coast, to the westward of the Niagara, seizing some boats belonging to the army, loaded with stores. Two vessels, similarly employed, were also captured.

On the 23d of June, fourteen guns, and a quantity of the rigging for the Pike, reached the harbour; and the next day Com. Chauncey advised the government to commence building a large fast-sailing schooner. This recommendation was followed, and the keel of a vessel, that was subsequently called the Sylph, was soon after laid, her size being determined by the nature of the materials necessary for her equipment, which were principally on the spot.

It was the last of June before the people began to arrive for the Pike; the first draft, consisting of only thirty-five men, reaching the harbour on the 29th of that month. These were followed, on the 1st of July, by ninety-four more from Boston. It was thought, by the assistance of the army, that the ship might be got out, with the aid of these men. In estimating the embarrassments of the lake service in general, the reluctance of the sailors of the country to serve on those waters should not be overlooked. The stations were known to be sickly, the service was exceedingly arduous, several winter months were to be passed, under a rigorous climate, in harbours that had none of the ordinary attractions of a seaport, and the chances for prize-money were too insignificant to enter into the account. At this period in the history of the navy, the men were entered for particular ships, and not for the general service, as at present; and it would have been nearly impossible to procure able seamen

for this unpopular duty, had not the means been found to induce parts of crews to follow their officers from the Atlantic coast, as volunteers. A considerable party had been sent from the Constitution to Lake Ontario, afterher return from the coast of Brazil, and the arrival of a portion of the crew of the John Adams, on Lake Erie, has already been mentioned. On the 8th of July, Captain Crane arrived from the same ship; and two days later, he was followed by all the officers and men of that vessel, for which a new crew had been enlisted. This timely reinforcement was assigned, in a body, to the Madison, that ship being nearly of the size and force of the vessel from which they came.

On the afternoon of the 1st of July, however, or previously to this important accession to his force, a deserter came in and reported that Sir James Yeo had left Kingston the previous night, in twenty large boats, with a body of eight hundred or one thousand men, with which he had crossed and landed in Chaumont Bay, about seven miles from the harbour. Here he had encamped in the woods, concealing his boats with the branches of trees, with an intention to make an attack on the American squadron in the course of the approaching night. Preparations were accordingly made to receive the expected assault, but the enemy did not appear. On the following morning Com. Chauncey went out with the vessels that were ready, and examined the shore, but the enemy could not be found. At sunset he returned, and moored the vessels in readiness for the attack. Still no enemy appeared. That night and the succeeding day, five more deserters came in, all corroborating each other's accounts, by which it would seem that the expedition

was abandoned on the night of the first, in consequence of the desertion of the man who had first come in. At this time the Pike had sixteen of her guns mounted; and there is little doubt that Com. Yeo would have been defeated, had he persevered in his original intention. By July 3rd, the remainder of her armament had reached the harbour.

Soon after, Com. Chauncey felt himself strong enough to despatch one hundred and thirty men, with the necessary officers, to the upper lakes; and permission was given to Captain Perry to commence his operations against the enemy, as soon as that officer should deem it prudent. Still a proportion of the men present, that varied from a tenth to a fifth of their whole numbers, was reported on the sick list; among whom were Captain Sinclair of the Pike, all the lieutenants of that ship but one, and sixty of her people.

On the 21st of July, the Madison, Captain Crane, went off Kingston, communicating with the commodore by signal, the latter remaining at anchor in the Pike, which ship was getting ready as fast as possible. The same evening the latter went out, accompanied by the squadron, running over to the north shore, and then steered to the westward. The winds were light, and the vessels did not arrive off the mouth of the Niagara until the 27th. Here a small body of troops was embarked under Colonel Scott, and the squadron proceeded to the head of the lake, with a view to make a descent at Burlington Bay. After landing the troops and marines, and reconnoitring, Colonel Scott believed the enemy to be too strong, and too well posted, for the force under his command; and on the 30th the vessels weighed and ran down to York.

Here Colonel Scott landed without opposition, and got possession of the place. A considerable quantity of provisions, particularly flour, was seized, five pieces of cannon were found, some shot and powder were brought off, and eleven boats, built to transport troops, were destroyed. Some barracks, and other public buildings, were burned. The troops re-embarked on the 1st of August, and on the 3rd they were disembarked again, in the Niagara. The next day, Lieutenant Elliott, with Messrs. Smith and Conklin, eight midshipmen, and one hundred men, were landed and sent up to Lake Erie, to report themselves to Captain Perry. This draft greatly deranged the crew of the Pike, her men requiring to be stationed anew, after it had been made.

At daylight, on the morning of the 7th, while at anchor off the mouth of the Niagara, the enemy's squadron, consisting of two ships, two brigs, and two large schooners, were seen to the north-west and to windward, distant about six miles. The American vessels immediately weighed, and endeavoured to obtain the weather gage, the construction of a large portion of the force rendering this advantage important in a general action. At this time Com. Chauncey had present, the Pike, Madison, Oneida, Hamilton, Scourge, Ontario, Fair American, Governor Tompkins, Conquest, Julia, Growler, Asp, and Pert, or thirteen sail. Of this force, the three vessels first named were all that had been regularly constructed for the purposes of war. The rest had no quarters, as has been already mentioned, mounting one or two guns on circles, and, in a few instances, five or six others in broadside. The schooners could scarcely have been fought with prudence, within reach

of canister, as the men were exposed from their feet upwards. On the other hand, the six vessels of the enemy had all been constructed for war, had close quarters, and their schooners had regular sea armaments. This difference in the character of the respective forces rendered it difficult to bring on an action, as neither party would be willing to engage under circumstances that were disadvantageous to its particular species of armament. The size of the lake, which at first view might seem to render it difficult to avoid a combat, was in truth in favour of such a design; the distances being so small, that the retiring party, under ordinary circumstances, would have it in his power to gain a harbour, before its enemy could close. Both commanders, it is now understood, acted under very rigid instructions, it being known that the fortune of the northern war, in a great measure, depended on the command of this lake, and neither party was disposed to incur any undue risks of losing the chance to obtain it.

On the present occasion, however, Com. Chauncey was anxious to bring the enemy to battle, feeling a sufficient confidence in his officers and men to believe they would render his mixed and greatly divided force sufficiently available. The principal advantage of the enemy was in the identity of character that belonged to his squadron, which enabled him to keep it in compact order, and to give it concentrated and simultaneous evolutions, while the movements of the best of the American vessels were necessarily controlled by those of their worst. In short, the manœuvring of the American squadron, throughout this entire summer, furnishes an illustration of that nautical principle to which there has elsewhere been an allusion, in an

attempt to point out the vast importance of preserving an equality in the properties of ships. Indeed, the Pike and Madison alone could compete with vessels of ordinary qualities, the Oneida proving to be so dull, that the flag-ship was frequently compelled to take her in tow.*

At nine A. M., the Pike, having got abreast of the Wolfe, the leading vessel of the enemy, hoisted her ensign, and fired a few guns to try the range of her shot. Finding that the latter fell short, she wore and hauled to the wind on the other tack, the sternmost of the small schooners being then six miles distant. The enemy wore in succession, also, and got upon the same tack as the American squadron, but ascertaining that the leading vessels of the latter would weather upon him, he soon tacked, and hauled off to the northward. As soon as the rear of the American line was far enough ahead to fetch his wake, signal was made to the squadron to tack once more, and to crowd sail in chase. The wind now gradually fell, and about sunset it was calm, the schooners using their sweeps to close. As night approached, the signal of recal was made, in order to collect the squadron, there be-

* Although this brig had been regularly constructed for the navy, in the year 1808, and her dimensions made her about two hundred and forty tons, carpenter's measurement, her draught of water was not greater than that which would properly belong to a sloop of eighty tons. This was owing to a wish to enable her to enter the rivers of the south shore, nearly all of which have bars. It may be mentioned here, that the Oneida was salted. Mr. Woolsey, ascertaining that the schooners employed in the salt trade, between Oswego and Niagara, which were commonly built of half-seasoned timber, seldom decayed about the floors, had this brig filled with salt from her plank-sheer down, and it is understood that she was sound many years afterwards. The timber was cut in the forest, moulded, and placed in the brig's frame, within the same month.

ing an apprehension that some of the small vessels might be cut off.

The wind came from the westward in the night, and it blew in squalls. All the vessels were at quarters, carrying sail to gain the wind of the enemy, with a view to engage him in the morning. Not long after midnight, a rushing sound was heard; and several of the vessels felt more or less of a squall; but the strength of the gust passed astern. Soon after, it was ascertained that the Hamilton, Lieutenant Winter, and Scourge, Mr. Osgood, had disappeared. The Pike now spoke the Governor Tompkins, which informed the commodore that the missing schooners had capsized in the squall, and that the whole of their officers and men, with the exception of sixteen of the latter, had been drowned. It is supposed, as all the vessels were at quarters, and the guns were loose, that when the gust struck the vessels, their heavy guns, which worked on slides, with the shot on deck, went to leeward, and helped to carry these two schooners over. This accident showed how unsuited these vessels were to the service on which they were employed, those lost having been two of the very best in the squadron, mounting between them nineteen guns.

The American squadron now hove-to, and soon after daylight the enemy set studding-sails, and stood down upon it, apparently with an intention to engage. When a little more than a league distant, however, he brought by the wind, and the signal was made from the Pike to wear, and to bring-to on the same tack. After waiting some time for the English ships to come down, Com. Chauncey edged away for the land, hoping, by getting the breeze which, at that

season, usually came off the southern shore, in the afternoon, to obtain the weather-gage. It fell calm, however, and the schooners were ordered to sweep up towards the enemy, and to bring him to action. While the latter were attempting to execute this order, the wind came out light at the eastward, when the Pike took the Oneida in tow, and stood down towards the enemy. The van of the schooners had got within two miles of the English squadron, when the breeze suddenly shifted to the westward, giving the latter the advantage of the wind. Sir James Yeo now bore up, in the expectation of cutting off the American small vessels, before the ships could cover them; but the former, by freely using their sweeps, soon got into their stations again, when the enemy hauled by the wind and hove-to.

It now became squally, and the people having been at quarters nearly two days and nights, and the enemy, who was evidently indisposed to engage, unless on his own terms, possessing a great advantage in such weather, as the late accident sufficiently proved, Com. Chauncey ran in, and anchored at the mouth of the Niagara. It blew heavy in squalls throughout the night, but the enemy being in sight to the northward, at daylight, the squadron weighed and stood out after him. Throughout the whole of this day, and of the succeeding night, under a succession of squalls, light airs, and calms, and constant changes in the direction of the winds, the American vessels were endeavouring to close with the enemy, without success. At daylight, however, on the morning of the 10th, Com. Chauncey, having taken the precaution to get under the north shore, found himself to windward, with the enemy bearing S.W. The Pike now took the Asp,

and the Madison the Fair American, in tow, and the whole squadron kept away, with every prospect of forcing the English to engage. About noon, and before the squadrons were within gun-shot of each other, the wind shifted to W.S.W., giving the enemy the weather-gage. Throughout the day, there was a series of unsuccessful manœuvres to close and to gain the wind, but, about five P.M., the enemy was becalmed under the south shore, and the American squadron got a breeze from N.N.W., nearing him fast. At six, being then distant about four miles, the line of battle was formed, though the wind had become very light. The vessels continued to close until seven, when a fresh breeze came out at S.W., placing the enemy once more to windward. After some manœuvring, the two squadrons were standing to the northward, with their larboard tacks aboard, under easy canvass, the enemy astern and to windward. It being now pretty certain that, with vessels of qualities so unequal, he could not get the wind of the English, while the latter were disposed to avoid it, Com. Chauncey adopted an order of battle that was singularly well adapted to draw them down, and which was admirable for its advantages and ingenuity. The American squadron formed in two lines, one to windward of the other. The weather line consisted altogether of the smallest of the schooners, having in it, in the order in which they are named from the van to the rear, the Julia, Growler, Pert, Asp, Ontario, and Fair American. The line to leeward contained, in the same order, the Pike, Oneida, Madison, Governor Tompkins, and Conquest. It was hoped that Sir James Yeo would close with the weather line in the course of the night; and, with a view to bring him down, the Julia,

Growler, Pert, and Asp, were directed, after engaging as long as was prudent, to edge away, and to pass through the intervals left between the leading vessels of the line to leeward, forming again under their protection, while the Ontario and Fair American were directed to run into the leeward line, and form astern of the Conquest. Nothing could have been simpler, or better devised, than this order of battle; nor is it possible to say what might have been the consequences, had circumstances allowed the plan to be rigidly observed.

At half-past ten P. M., the enemy tacked and stood after the American squadron, keeping to windward of the weather line. At 11, the Fair American, the sternmost of the schooners in this line, began to fire; and the enemy continuing to draw ahead, in about fifteen minutes the action became general between him and the weather line. At half-past 11, all the schooners engaged bore up, according to orders, with the exception of the two most ahead, which tacked in the hope of gaining the wind of the English ships, instead of waring, or bearing up. This unfortunate departure from the order of battle entirely changed the state of things; Sir James Yeo, instead of following the schooners down, as had been expected, keeping his wind with a view to cut off the two that had separated. Com. Chauncey now filled, and kept away two points, in the hope of drawing the enemy off from the vessels to windward, but the English exchanged a few shot with the Pike in passing, and continued in pursuit of the two schooners. The American squadron immediately tacked, and endeavoured to close, with the double view of covering their consorts, and of engaging. As the chase was to windward, it was im-

possible to protect the vessels that had separated, the English ships easily getting them under their guns, and the former struck, of course.

The vessels captured were the Growler, Lieutenant Deacon; and the Julia, Mr. Trant.* They sustained a small loss before they surrendered, having, in some measure, repaired the fault they had committed, by the handsome manner in which they held on to the last. It was the opinion of Com. Chauncey, that these schooners were lost through excess of zeal in their commanders, who thought that a general action was about to take place, and that, by gaining the wind, they might be of more service than if stationed to

* James Trant was a sailing-master in the navy, from the time of its formation, until the close of the war of 1812. He was an Irishman by birth, and is believed to have come to this country in 1781, with Captain Barry, in the Alliance 32, or in the passage in which that ship captured the Trepassey and Atalanta. At any rate, the journals of the day mention that a Mr. Trent, (the manner in which the name is pronounced,) an Irish naval volunteer, had accompanied Captain Barry on that occasion. Few persons have given rise to more traditions in the service than Mr. Trant. His eccentricities were as conspicuous as his nautical peculiarities and his gallantry. His whole life was passed in or about ships, and his prejudices and habits were as thoroughly naval as those of Pipes himself. For England, and Englishmen, he entertained, to the last, the most unyielding hatred, which appeared to be associated, in his mind, with wrongs done to Ireland. He was usually supposed to be a man of obdurate feelings, and of a cruel disposition, but he was not without some of the finest traits of human nature. A volume might be written of his eccentricities and opinions. He had been in many actions, and was always remarkable for decision and intrepidity. His capture was owing to the latter quality. Towards the close of a life that extended to seventy years, he received the commission of a lieutenant, an honour that appeared to console him for all his hardships and dangers. He died at Philadelphia a few years after the war, and is said to have been found with pistols under his pillow to keep off the doctors. It is also said, we know not with what truth, that he ordered his body to be carried into blue water, and to be buried in the ocean.

leeward. The result showed the necessity of complete concert in naval evolutions, and the virtue of implicit obedience. Each of the vessels taken by the enemy carried two guns, and had a crew of about forty souls. Some damage was done to the sails and rigging of the enemy by the fire of the schooners, but the American squadron, the Julia and Growler excepted, received no injury worth mentioning. The Growler had a man killed, lost her bowsprit, and was a good deal damaged before she struck.

The Pike, after carrying sail hard for some time, finding that she was separating from the rest of the squadron, and that there was no hope of saving the two schooners, rejoined the other vessels, and formed the line again. At daylight, the enemy was seen a long way to windward, it blowing fresh. The small vessels beginning to labour excessively, it became necessary to send two of the dullest of them into the Niagara for security.

The gale increasing, the commodore now determined to run for the Genesee with the rest of the vessels; but the wind continuing, and the Madison and Oneida not having a day's provisions on board, he stood for the harbour, where he did not arrive until the 13th, the wind failing before he got in.

It was very evident from the operations of this arduous week, that the enemy intended to avoid an action, unless it could be brought on under circumstances altogether favourable to himself. Although the Pike most probably outsailed anything on the lake, and the Madison was nearly, if not quite, on an equality with the enemy's best vessels, yet these two ships were quite unequal to engaging the British squadron alone, and the remainder of the American

vessels did not deserve to be included in the class of cruisers at all. As a squadron, the English force was much faster than the American force, furnishing a complete example of the manner in which the best ships of a fleet are necessarily reduced, in this respect, to the level of the worst. The English were so much aware of the truth of this principle, that they declined putting the prizes into their squadron, but, after being disarmed, they were converted into transports.

It is now understood that the species of warfare that Sir James Yeo adopted was cautiously enjoined by his instructions, it being very evident that even a protracted struggle was better than positive defeat in the peculiar situation of the Canadas.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Sickness in the American squadron—Commodore Chauncey off the Niagara—Peculiar armament of the Sylph—Promotions—Running fight—English squadron in York Bay—Sir James Yeo's determination to engage—His retreat—Discretion of Commodore Chauncey—Injuries sustained by the Pike—English squadron at anchor—Capture of British vessels—Commodore Chauncey's wish to attack Kingston—Suspension of naval operations on Lake Ontario—Sir James Yeo's policy—Success of the American naval efforts—Unreasonable disappointment—Commodore Chauncey's merits.

THE enemy was also understood to be still building, though his extreme vigilance, and a practice of changing the names of his vessels, rendered it exceedingly difficult to obtain accurate information of the state of his fleet. A fine large schooner, superior in size and model to the Oneida, had been laid down at the Harbour some time previously, and was now nearly ready for launching.

The sickness among the people of the American squadron continued; the Madison, in particular, having more than a third of her crew on the doctor's list, when she sailed on her next cruise. As more than one hundred and fifty men had been taken from the

squadron by the loss of the four schooners, and so many were unable to do duty, Com. Chauncey, on his late return to the harbour, falling in with the Lady of the Lake, carrying a party of fifty marines up to Niagara, who were to join Captain Perry on the upper lakes, had taken them out for his own vessels, a measure that compelled the latter officer to obtain volunteers from the army to supply their places.

Without waiting for the new vessel, however, Com. Chauncey took in provisions for five weeks, and sailed on another cruise the very day of his arrival. On the 16th, the squadron was off the Niagara, and the same day the enemy was made, being eight sail in all. Some manœuvring to obtain the wind followed, but it coming on to blow, the vessels ran into the mouth of the Genesee, and anchored. This was another of the evil consequences of having vessels like the small schooners in the squadron, a sea little heavier than common causing them, with the heavy guns they carried, to labour to a degree that rendered it unsafe for them to keep the lake. The wind, however, freshened so much as to compel the whole squadron to weigh and bear up, forcing them down the lake under easy canvass. The enemy, it would seem, was also driven to leeward, for he was made out at anchor under the False Ducks, as those islands came in sight. The Fair American and Asp having been sent into the Niagara on duty, the vessels present in the American squadron, on this occasion, were the Pike, Madison, Oneida, Tompkins, Conquest, Ontario, Pert, and Lady of the Lake; the latter having no armament fit for a general engagement. It was now expected that the enemy would be willing to engage, and the vessels were cleared for action. The wind shifted again, how-

ever, bringing the English squadron to windward, but, by carrying sail hard, the American vessels were weathering on it, when the enemy ran behind the islands, and was believed to have stood into Kingston. The gale increasing, and the schooners being actually in danger of foundering, Commodore Chauncey bore up for the Harbour, where he arrived on the 19th of the month.

The new vessel had been launched the day before, and she was rigged into a schooner, and named the Sylph. Her armament was peculiar, for, in that comparative wilderness, the materials that could be had were frequently taken, in the place of those that were desired. Four long thirty-twos were mounted on circles between her masts, and six sixes were placed in broadside. As this vessel was expected to be weatherly, it was hoped these heavy guns might cut away some of the enemy's spars, and bring on a general action. It is due to the extraordinary capacity of the builder to say, that this schooner was put into the water in twenty-one working days after her keel had been laid.

The commissions of the officers promoted a short time previously were now found at the harbour, and Lieutenant Com. Woolsey was transferred to the Sylph, with his new rank; Lieutenant Thomas Brown, the officer who had so much distinguished himself at the landing before Fort George, succeeding him in the Oneida. The commission of master and commander was also sent after Mr. Elliott to Lake Erie, that gentleman having been promoted over many other lieutenants, as a reward for the capture of the two brigs, the previous autumn. Captain Trenchard left the station, on account of ill health. About this time, too,

Captain Perry made an application to be relieved from his command on the upper lakes, complaining of the quality of the crews of the vessels he commanded. It ought, indeed, to be mentioned that there was a general want of men on all the lakes, on account of the dislike of the Atlantic sailors to the service, and the fact that nearly all who came upon those waters from the sea-board, had to undergo a seasoning through disease. It appears by the official reports made about this time, that nearly one man in six, and even a larger proportion in some of the vessels, were left on shore in consequence of illness. At one time, this season, the Madison had eighty men, in a complement of about two hundred, on the sick list, or nearly half her people.

On the 28th of August, Com. Chauncey sailed again, with the Pike, Madison, Sylph, Oneida, Tompkins, Conquest, Ontario, Pert, and Lady of the Lake; nine sail in all, of which four had been built for cruisers, though the Sylph was unsuited to close action; four were the merchant schooners so often mentioned, and the last a look-out vessel.

The enemy was not seen until the 7th of September, when, the squadron lying at anchor in, and off, the Niagara, his ships were made out at daylight, close in and to leeward. The signal to weigh was instantly shown, and the Pike, Madison, and Sylph, each taking a schooner in tow, sail was made in chase. The enemy bore up to the northward, and for six days the American squadron followed the English, endeavouring to bring it to action, without success. On the 11th of September, the enemy was becalmed off the Genesee, when the American vessels got a breeze and ran within gun-shot, before the English squadron took the wind.

A running fight, that lasted more than three hours, was the result; but the enemy escaped in consequence of his better sailing, it being out of the power of the American commander to close with more than two of his vessels, on account of the peculiar armament of the Sylph. As the Pike succeeded in getting several broadsides at the enemy, he did not escape without being a good deal cut up, having, according to his own report, an officer and ten men killed and wounded. The Pike was hulled a few times, and other trifling injuries were received, though no person was hurt. Previously to this affair, Com. Chauncey had been joined by the Fair American and Asp. On the 12th, Sir James Yeo ran into Amherst Bay, where the Americans were unable to follow him, on account of their ignorance of the shoals. It was supposed that the English commodore declined engaging on this occasion, in consequence of the smoothness of the water, it being his policy to bring his enemy to action in blowing weather, when the American schooners would be virtually useless.

Com. Chauncey remained off the Ducks until the 17th, when the English squadron succeeded in getting into Kingston, after which he went into port for despatches and supplies. The next day, however, he came out again, and on the 19th the enemy was seen in the vicinity of the Ducks. No notice was now taken of him, but the squadron stood up the lake, in the hope that the English would follow, and with a view to bring down a brigade of troops, a division of the army being about to concentrate at Sackett's Harbour, preparatory to descending the St. Lawrence with a view to attack Montreal.

In a day or two the squadron got off the Niagara,

and anchored. Here a rumour reached it, that there had been a general and decisive action between the English and American forces on the upper lakes. On the 26th of September information was received that Sir James Yeo was at York, with all his squadron. The Lady of the Lake was sent across to ascertain the fact, on the morning of the 27th, and returning the same evening with a confirmation of the report, the squadron instantly got under way. Owing to the wind, the darkness of the night, and the bad sailing of so many of the vessels, the squadron was not got into line until 8 A. M., on the morning of the 28th, when the Pike, Madison, and Sylph, each took a schooner in tow, as usual, and sail was made for the north shore.

The English squadron was soon discovered under canvass in York Bay, and the American vessels immediately edged away for it. Fortunately the Americans had the weather-gage, the wind being at the eastward, blowing a good breeze. As soon as the enemy perceived the American ships approaching, he tacked and stretched out into the lake, in order to get room to manœuvre, Com. Chauncey forming his line, and steering directly for his centre. When the American squadron was about a league distant, the English ships made all sail, on a wind, to the southward. The former now wore in succession, to get on the same tack with the enemy; and as soon as this was effected, it began to edge away again, in order to close.

The enemy now had no alternative between putting up his helm, and running off before the wind, thus satisfactorily demonstrating which party sought, and which avoided a general action, or in allowing the Americans to commence the engagement. Notwith-

standing the wariness with which Sir James Yeo had hitherto manœuvred to prevent a decisive combat, he had always maintained the pretension of seeking a conflict, probably with a view to encourage the colonies, and a retreat at this moment would have been too unequivocally a flight to admit of palliation. The American squadron was a good deal extended, in consequence of the great difference in the sailing of its vessels, the Pike being considerably ahead of most of her consorts. As the signal was flying for close action, the Governor Tompkins had passed several of the larger vessels, and was next astern of the commodore, while the Madison, which had one of the heaviest of the schooners in tow, was prevented from getting as near as was desirable. The Oneida, too, now showed her worst qualities, no exertions of her gallant commander, Lieutenant Com. Brown, being able to urge her ahead as fast as was necessary. In this state of things Sir James Yeo, perceiving that his two sternmost vessels were in danger, and that there was some little chance of cutting off the rear of the American line, which was a good deal extended, he determined to tack, and to hazard an engagement.

At ten minutes past meridian, accordingly, the English ships began to tack in succession, while the Pike made a yaw to leeward, edging away rapidly, to get nearer to the enemy's centre. As soon as the two or three leading vessels of the enemy, among which were the Wolfe and Royal George, got round, they opened on the Pike, which ship received their fire for several minutes without returning it. When near enough, she opened in her turn. The Pike, on this occasion, was not only beautifully handled, but her fire was probably as severe as ever came out of the broad-

side of a ship of her force. For twenty minutes she lay opposed to all the heaviest vessels of the enemy, receiving little or no support from any of her own squadron, with the exception of the Asp, the schooner she had in tow, and the Governor Tompkins. The latter vessel, commanded for the occasion by Lieutenant W. C. B. Finch,* of the Madison, was handled with a gallantry that reflected high credit on that young officer, steadily keeping the station into which she had been so spiritedly carried, and maintaining a warm fire until crippled by the enemy, and unavoidably left astern. When the smoke blew away, during a pause in this sharp combat, it was found that the Wolfe had lost her main and mizen top-masts and her main-yard, besides receiving other injuries. Cut up so seriously, she put away dead before the wind, crowding all the canvass she could carry on her forward spars. At this moment the Royal George luffed up in noble style, across her stern, to cover the English commodore, who ran off to leeward, passing through his own line, in order to effect his retreat. There is no question that this timely and judicious movement of Sir James Yeo saved his squadron, for had he remained long enough to permit the Madison and Oneida to use their carronades, his whole force would have been sacrificed.

The enemy bore up a few minutes before one P. M., and the Pike immediately made a signal for a general chase. As the enemy went off to leeward, the Royal George kept yawing athwart the English commodore's stern, and delivering her broadsides in a manner to extort exclamations of delight from the American fleet.

* Now Captain W. C. Bolton.

She was commanded by Captain Mulcaster, an officer who won the perfect esteem of his enemies by his gallantry and good conduct on this occasion.

When the English squadron bore up, the American vessels followed, maintaining a heavy fire with as many of their circle and chase guns as could reach the enemy. It was now found that the armament of the Sylph was not suited to service, the guns between her masts being so crowded as not to allow of their being used with freedom or rapidity, more especially when in chase. This circumstance, notwithstanding her size and sailing, rendered her scarcely of more use than one of the smaller schooners.

After pursuing the enemy about two hours, during which time the squadron had run nearly up to the head of the lake, where the former had a port at Burlington Bay, and finding that the English ships outsailed most of his vessels, Com. Chauncey made the signal to haul off, with a view to stand in for the Niagara. As the enemy was effectually beaten, and there is scarcely a doubt would have been destroyed, had he been pressed, this order has been much criticised, as uncalled for and unfortunate. The motives which influenced the American commander, however, were marked by that discretion and thoughtfulness which are among the highest attributes of an officer, and which distinguished his whole career while entrusted with the arduous and responsible service over which he presided during the war. The wind was increasing, and it shortly after came on to blow an easterly gale, and an action, under such circumstances, would probably have caused both squadrons to have been thrown ashore, there being nothing but a roadstead under

Burlington Heights, which the wind that then blew swept.

As the enemy was known to have a considerable land force at this point, all who were driven ashore would necessarily have fallen into his hands; and had he succeeded in getting off one or two of the smaller vessels, he would effectually have obtained the command of the lake. By going in to the Niagara, on the other hand, the American squadron was in a position to intercept the retreat of the enemy, who was in a *cul de sac*, and after waiting for more moderate weather he might be attacked even at anchor, should it be deemed expedient, under much more favourable circumstances. In addition to these reasons, which were weighty, and worthy of a commander of reflection and judgment, the Pike had received a shot or two beneath her water line, which required her pumps to be kept going, a toil that, united to the labour of an action, would have finally exhausted the strength of the ship's company. The enemy had batteries to command the anchorage, too, and no doubt he would have established more, had the Americans come in.

The gale continued until the evening of the 31st, the wind standing to the eastward even several days longer. During this time Com. Chauncey communicated with the commanding general at Niagara, who deemed it more important that he should watch Sir James Yeo, than that he should accompany the transports down the lake. As this opinion coincided with that of the commanding naval officer himself, the troops were embarked and sent off as fast as the transports could be got ready, while the squadron held

itself in reserve to intercept the enemy, as soon as he should attempt to come to the westward.

In the action of the 28th of September the Pike suffered a good deal, both in her hull and aloft, bearing the weight of the enemy's fire for most of the time. Her main-top-gallant mast was shot away early in the engagement, and her bowsprit, fore-mast, and main-mast were all wounded. Her rigging and sails were much cut up, and she had been repeatedly hulled; two or three times below the water-line, as already stated. Five of her men only were killed and wounded by shot. While bearing up in chase, however, the starboard bow gun bursted, by which accident twenty-two men were either slain or seriously injured. The top-gallant forecastle was torn up by this explosion, rendering its circle gun useless during the remainder of the day. Four of the other guns also cracked in the muzzles, producing great distrust about using them. The Madison received some slight injuries, and the Oneida had her maintop-mast badly wounded. But no person was hurt in either of these vessels. The Governor Tompkins lost her foremast. On the part of the enemy, the Wolfe and Royal George suffered most; and it is believed that the former vessel sustained a heavy loss in men. It is also understood that one, if not two, of the enemy's smallest vessels struck, but the Pike declining to take possession, in the eagerness to close with the Wolfe, they eventually escaped.

On the 2d the wind coming round light to the westward, and the last transport having been sent down the lake with troops, the squadron weighed, and stretched out to look for the enemy. At ten A. M, he

was seen standing down, under studding sails. The instant the American vessels were made, however, the enemy came by the wind and carried sail, to keep off. During the remainder of this day the English ships gained on the American, and at daylight on the 3d they were seen at anchor, close in under an island between Twelve and Twenty Mile Creeks. It blew in gusts, and quite heavily, throughout the day, both squadrons turning to windward, the enemy being nearly up with the head of the lake at sunset. The night proved dark and squally, with a good deal of rain, and every precaution was taken to prevent the enemy from getting past, as he was now caught, as it might be, in a net.

The next morning the weather was thick, and nothing could be seen of the English squadron. It falling calm at noon, the Lady of the Lake was ordered to sweep up towards the head of the lake, to ascertain the position of the enemy, or whether he had not anchored again in Burlington Bay. At nine P. M. the schooner returned, and reported that the English squadron was not to be seen, only two gunboats being visible. As a discreet and experienced officer had been sent on this service, Com. Chauncey immediately inferred that the enemy had got past him during the darkness of the preceding night, and that he had gone down the lake either to cut off the American transports, or to get into Kingston. Sail was immediately made to run off the Ducks, with a view to intercept Sir James Yeo, or any prizes he might have taken. It is now known that the officers of the Lady of the Lake were deceived, the British fleet actually lying at anchor so close under the heights, that their hulls and spars were confounded with objects on

the shore; the gentlemen sent to ascertain the fact being too eager to report the supposed escape of the enemy, to go near enough in to make certain of the truth. There is little question that this unfortunate mistake alone saved the British squadron from a signal defeat; the result of the action of the 28th, and a knowledge of recent events on Lake Erie, having raised such a feeling among the American vessels, as would almost insure a victory, and the end of the lake being now a weather shore, an attack at anchor would have been perfectly safe.

That night and the succeeding day the American squadron made a great run, the wind blowing heavily from the N. W. At three P. M., on the 5th, seven sail were seen ahead, near the False Duck, and no doubts were entertained that they were the British squadron. All sail was carried to close, but at four the chases were made out to be schooners and sloops. Signals were now shown for the Sylph and Lady of the Lake to cast off their tows, and to chase to the N. E. This induced the strangers to separate, when the Pike cast off the Governor Tompkins, and passed ahead also. The strangers now set fire to one of their vessels, the other six crowding sail to escape. At sunset, when opposite the Real Ducks, the British vessels the Confiance, Hamilton and Mary, struck to the Pike. The Sylph soon after joined, bringing down with her the Drummond cutter, another prize, and early next morning the same schooner brought out of the Ducks the Lady Gore. The Enterprise, the seventh vessel, escaped.

The prizes were gun-vessels, carrying from one to three guns each, and were employed as transports; a part of one of the foreign regiments in the British service being on board at the time. The whole num-

ber of prisoners made amounted to two hundred and sixty-four, including officers. Among the latter were a lieutenant and two master's mates of the British Royal Navy, and four masters of the provincial marine. Ten officers of the army were also taken. The Confiance and Hamilton, two of the prizes, were the schooners Growler and Julia, taken on the night of the 8th of August, which, the enemy had rightly judged, would prove an encumbrance rather than an accession to their squadron, and had declined receiving them in it. This circumstance, of itself, sufficiently proves the equivocal advantage enjoyed by the possession of these craft, which formed so conspicuous a part of Com. Chauncey's force on paper, the enemy being unwilling to injure the manœuvring of his vessels by using them.

This success virtually terminated the naval struggle for the command of Lake Ontario, during the season of 1813; Sir James Yeo, probably influenced by the nature of the combat on the 28th of September, appearing disposed to wait for a reinforcement, before he risked another action. For the remainder of the season, Com. Chauncey was employed in watching the enemy in Kingston, and in aiding the army in its descent of the St. Lawrence. It was the wish of the naval commander to attack Kingston, and he had even been flattered with the promise that his favourite project should be adopted, but about the middle of October the scheme appears to have been entirely abandoned, in order to make a descent on Montreal. Had the first plan been adhered to, it is almost certain success would have attended it, and the whole character of the war might have been changed.

Early in November, Com. Chauncey was lying at

the outlet of the St. Lawrence, below the east end of Long Island, when Sir James Yeo came out with his ships, and anchored within two leagues of him, the squadrons being separated by a chain of small islands. There was but one passage by which this chain could be passed, and the Americans sent boats to sound it, intending to lighten and go through, when the enemy lifted his anchors and returned to port. On the 11th, the army having gone down the river, the American squadron went into the harbour.

Two days later, Com. Chauncey, who had now almost an undisturbed possession of the lake, went to the Genesee, where, on the 16th of the month, he took on board eleven hundred men, belonging to the army of General Harrison. A severe gale came on, by which the vessels were separated, some being driven as far west as the head of the lake. The transports, into which most of the small schooners were now converted, having been finally despatched, the commodore went off Kingston again, to occupy the enemy, and to cover the passage of the troops. All the transports had arrived on the 21st but the Julia, which did not get in until a few days later. The Fair American had gone ashore near the Niagara, during the gale, but was got off, and reached the harbour on the 27th. By this time, the navigation of the lake was virtually closed, and it being too late to attempt any naval operations, while the duty of transporting the troops and stores had been successfully performed, preparations were made to lay the vessels up for the winter.

Thus terminated the naval operations on Lake Ontario, during the season of 1813. The peculiar nature of the service rendered the duties of both com-

manders extremely arduous, and each appears to have acquitted himself well in his particular station. It was the policy, and it is understood it had been made the enjoined duty of Sir James Yeo, by means of especial orders, to avoid a general action, unless under decidedly favourable circumstances; and the identified character of his vessels enabled him to pursue the course prescribed with tolerable success, though the perseverance and personal intrepidity of his antagonist had forced him to the very verge of a total defeat in the affair of the 28th of September. In executing his orders, the English commodore, who was an officer of rare merit, manifested great steadiness, self-denial, and address, and the skill and boldness with which he manœuvred received the applause of his enemies. That he was kept principally on the defensive, and was prevented from effecting anything of importance, was owing to the vigilance and activity of his opponent, who so often anticipated his measures, and so closely pressed him, whenever there was an opportunity to engage.

But the success of the naval efforts of this season was decidedly with the Americans. By covering the descent at York, and producing the fall of that place, where a very large amount of stores was captured, one new cruiser of some force destroyed, and a second brought off, Com. Chauncey deprived his enemy of the means of effectually securing a decided superiority on the lake, as the first blow of the season. The fall of Fort George, which altogether depended on the co-operation of the navy, led the way to the success on the upper lake, to the recapture of Michigan, and to the virtual submission, for the remainder of the cam-

paign, of all the higher counties of Upper Canada. An army was transported from the foot of the lake to its head, in the spring, and from near the head to the foot in the autumn; nor is it known that a single man, gun, or any amount of stores that was confided to the navy, in the course of this service, fell into the hands of the enemy. All the duty required for the army was effectually accomplished, and without molestation from the English, while the latter, with the exception of a very short period, during which the Pike was waiting for her guns, was obliged to perform the similar service for his own army, clandestinely, and with the utmost caution. It has been seen that one of his transports was burned, and five were captured. The only reverse sustained by the American squadron was the loss of the Growler and Julia, as mentioned, and this resulted from no fault of the commanding officer, whose dispositions were officer-like and simple.

In the course of the summer the hostile squadrons were three times engaged. On two of these occasions the enemy had the wind, or obtained it before the ships could close, and it rested with him, of course, to bring on a general action, or to avoid it. On the third, the Americans attacked with so much vigour, with only a part of their force, as to leave no doubt what would have been the result, had not the English vessels put before the wind. Among American seamen, the manner in which Com. Chauncey bore down on the hostile line of the enemy, on the 28th of September, supported by Mr. Finch, in the Governor Tompkins, and a schooner in tow, has ever been considered as an instance of high professional feeling and spirit;

cases of so much self-devotion, coolness, and intrepidity, in which British squadrons have been the party attacked, being extremely rare in modern times. It is not certain that a parallel to it can be found within a century, if we except a very striking instance afforded by the conduct of Captain Perry, of whom there will be occasion to speak, in the succeeding chapter.

Notwithstanding the services of the naval commander on the great lakes, public expectation, at the time, was disappointed. Bodies of men, who are seldom competent to judge of the nicer circumstances that qualify merit, and particularly that which is so exclusively of a professional character as the conduct of a naval commander, are apt to assume that success is the only admissible standard; and while the success of the season was clearly with the Americans, it was not success of the brilliant and attractive nature that is the most apt to extort popular admiration. Few were qualified to understand that the size of the lake favoured the policy of Sir James Yeo, by enabling him to run under the guns of his own batteries, when hardest pressed, but the majority considered that the smaller the sheet of water on which the operations occurred, the easier it would be to bring on an action. On the several occasions in which the American squadron chased the enemy into Burlington, Amherst, and Kingston Bays, the public was more disposed to regard the force in the presence of which the different escapes were made, than the facilities that existed to effect it. It called for victory, without recollecting that the consent of both belligerents would be necessary to obtain even a battle; and of all those who were most dis-

posed to compare the absence of a victory on Lake Ontario, with the brilliant successes elsewhere obtained, few probably remembered that no instance occurred in the whole war, the peculiar cases of the Essex and President excepted, in which either an English or an American public vessel was captured, after a battle, and in which the defeated party avoided the combat. Owing to the chances of war, in no instance whatever was an English ship taken under such circumstances.

But time has gradually weakened this feeling, and the country already views the efforts of Com. Chauncey in their true light. The rapidity and decision with which he created a force, as it might be in a wilderness, the professional resources that he discovered in attaining this great end, and the combined gallantry and prudence with which he conducted before the enemy, are beginning to be fully appreciated, while the intrepidity with which he carried his ship into action off York has already become a subject of honest exultation in the service to which he belongs. If the American commander committed a fault, in the course of the arduous duties of the months of August, September, October, and November, it was in not making a signal to his squadron to cast off their tows, after the enemy bore up on the 28th of September; but though it may now be easy to detect the error, he chose the side of a discreet caution, having every human probability of getting alongside of his enemy on his own terms, as soon as the gale should abate. That he did not, was purely the result of accident, or rather of the mistake of an experienced and prudent officer, on whose report he had every motive to rely.

Had Com. Chauncey followed Sir James Yeo into Burlington Bay on that occasion, he would probably have obtained one of the highest reputations of the American navy, without as much deserving it as at present.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Captain Perry on the upper lakes—Order of battle between the English and American squadrons—The engagement—Surrender of the English—Comparison between the force of the hostile squadrons—Captain Perry's report of the action—His line of battle—Error of the British—Results of the victory—Promotion of Captain Perry.

THE manner in which the service commenced on the upper lakes has been already mentioned, but it will connect the narrative to make a short recapitulation. It will be remembered that late in the autumn of 1812, Lieutenant Elliott had been sent to the foot of Erie to contract for some schooners. He was soon after recalled to Ontario, and was succeeded in command by Lieutenant Angus. Not long after the landing at Erie, Mr. Angus returned to the sea-board, and Lieutenant Pettigrew, for a short time, was in command. In the course of the winter Captain O. H. Perry, then a young master and commander at the head of the flotilla of gun-boats at Newport, Rhode Island, finding no immediate prospect of getting to sea in a sloop-of-war, voluntcered for the lake service. Captain Perry

brought on with him a number of officers and a few men, and Com. Chauncey gladly availed himself of the presence of an officer of his rank, known spirit and zeal, to send him in command on the upper lakes, where he arrived in the course of the winter. From this time until the navigation opened, Captain Perry was actively employed, under all the embarrassments of his frontier position, in organising and creating a force, with which he might contend with the enemy for the mastery of those important waters. Two large brigs, to mount twenty guns each, were laid down at Presque Isle, and a few gun-vessels or schooners were also commenced. The spring passed in procuring guns, shot, and other supplies, and, as circumstances allowed, a draft of men would arrive from below to aid in equipping the different vessels. As soon as the squadron of Com. Chauncey appeared off the mouth of Niagara, Captain Perry, with some of his officers, went to join it; and the former was efficiently employed in superintending the disembarkation of the troops, as has been already related. The fall of Fort George produced that of Fort Erie, when the whole of the Niagara frontier came under the control of the American army.

Captain Perry now repaired to his own command, and with infinite labour he succeeded in getting the vessels that had so long been detained in the Niagara, by the enemy's batteries, out of the river. This important service was effected by the 12th of June, and preparations were immediately commenced for appearing on the lake. These vessels consisted of the brig Caledonia, (a prize,) and the schooners Catherine, Ohio, and Amelia, with the sloop Contractor. The Catherine was named the Somers, the Amelia

the Tigress, and the Contractor the Trippe. At this time the enemy had a cruising force under the orders of Captain Finnis, which consisted of the Queen Charlotte, a ship of between three and four hundred tons, and mounting seventeen guns; the Lady Prevost, a fine warlike schooner, of about two hundred tons, that mounted thirteen guns; the brig Hunter, a vessel a little smaller, of ten guns, and three or four lighter cruisers. He was also building, at Malden, a ship of near five hundred tons measurement, that was to mount nineteen guns, and which was subsequently called the Detroit.*

* Contradictory accounts having been given of the sizes of these vessels, the writer feels it due to himself to mention his authorities. At the Navy Department is an appraisement of the prizes taken on Lake Erie, made by two impartial and experienced captains, in conjunction with the celebrated builder, Henry Eckford. With a view to compare the opinions of these gentlemen with those of others competent to judge, an officer familiar with the vessels, now a captain, was desired to set down his recollections of the sizes of the six British vessels taken on Lake Erie. In "James's Naval Occurrences" is a table professing to contain the English statement of the same tonnage. As it is not improbable this statement was derived from the public offices, we give the three as we found them.

	Appraisers.	Am. Officer.	James.
Detroit . .	near 500 tons.	do. 500	305
Queen Charlotte,	about 400	380	280
Lady Prevost . .	230	200	120
Hunter . . .	180	150	74
Little Belt .	near 100	70	54
Chippeway .	near 100	70	32
	1,510	1,370	805

It is proper to add, that the American officer consulted knew nothing of the appraisement. The discrepancy between the American and English accounts may possibly be explained in the following manner. A vessel of war is measured for the purposes of estimating her cost, half the *breadth of beam* being assumed to be the *depth of hold*. The vessels on the lakes could scarcely be said

It was near the end of June before Captain Perry was ready to sail from the outlet of Lake Erie, for Presque Isle. There being no intention to engage the enemy, and little dread of meeting him in so short a run, as she came in sight of her port each vessel made the best of her way. The enemy had chosen this moment to look into Presque Isle, and both squadrons were in view from the shore at the same time, though, fortunately for the Americans, the English did not get a sight of them until they were too near the land to be intercepted. As the last vessel got in, the enemy hove in sight in the offing.

The two brigs laid down in the winter, under the directions of Com. Chauncey, had been launched towards the close of May, and were now in a state of forwardness. They were called the Lawrence and the Niagara. The schooners also were in the water, and Captain Perry, having all his vessels in one port, employed himself in getting them ready for service as fast as possible. Still various stores were wanting. There was a great deficiency of men, particularly of seamen, and Captain Perry and Mr. D. Turner were, as yet, the only commissioned sea-officers on the lake. The latter, moreover, was quite young in years, as well as in rank.

Presque Isle, or, as the place is now called, Erie,

to have any holds; the American brigs, which, on the ocean, would have drawn sixteen feet of water, drawing not more than half as much on the lakes. Consequently, the carpenter's work was essentially less on these vessels than on those built for the ocean. The object of the measurement being to calculate the cost, it is not improbable that Mr. James has been furnished with an estimate of the tonnage, by which the holds were actually measured, as is usual with vessels that have but one deck, a mode of calculating that would fully account for the difference.

was a good and spacious harbour; but it then had a bar on which there was less than seven feet of water. This bar, which had hitherto answered the purposes of a fortification, now offered a serious obstruction to getting the two brigs on the lake. It lay about half a mile outside, and offered great advantages to the enemy, did he choose to profit by them for attacking the Americans while employed in passing it. So sensible was Captain Perry of this, that he adopted the utmost secrecy in order to conceal his intentions, for it was known that the enemy had spies closely watching his movements.

Captain Barclay had lately superseded Captain Finnis in the command of the English force, and for near a week he had been blockading the American vessels, evidently with an intention to prevent their getting out, it being known that this bar could be crossed only in smooth water. On Friday, the 2nd of August, he suddenly disappeared in the northern board.*

The next day but one was Sunday, and the officers were ashore seeking the customary relaxation. Without any appearances of unusual preparation, Captain Perry privately gave the order to repair on board their respective vessels, and to drop down to the bar. This command was immediately obeyed; and at about two P. M. the Lawrence had been towed to the point where the deepest water was known to be. Her guns where whipped out, loaded and shotted as they were,

* It is said that Captain Barclay lost the command of Lake Erie by accepting an invitation to dine on Sunday with a gentlemen on the north shore. While his vessels were under the Canadian coast, the lake became smooth, and the bar passable. Captain Perry seized the precious moment, and effected his purpose.

and landed on the beach; two large scows, prepared for the purpose, were hauled along side, and the work of lifting the brig proceeded as fast as possible. Pieces of massive timber had been run through the forward and after ports, and when the scows were sunk to the water's edge, the ends of the timbers were blocked up, supported by these floating foundations. The plugs were now put in the scows, and the water was pumped out of them. By this process the brig was lifted quite two feet, though when she was got on the bar it was found that she still drew too much water. It became necessary, in consequence, to come up everything, sink the scows anew, and to block up the timbers afresh. This duty occupied the night.

The schooners had crossed the bar, and were moored outside, and preparations were hurriedly made to receive an attack. About eight A. M. the enemy reappeared. At this time the Lawrence was just passing the bar. A distant, short, and harmless cannonade ensued, though it had the effect to keep the enemy from running in. As soon as the Lawrence was in deep water her guns were hoisted in, manned as fast as mounted, and the brig's broadside was sprung to bear on the English squadron. Fortunately, the Niagara crossed on the first trial; and before night all the vessels were as ready for service as circumstances would then allow. But the enemy remained with his topsails to the mast for only half an hour, sullenly reconnoitring, then filled, and went up the lake under a press of canvass.

This occurred on the 4th of August, and on the 5th Captain Perry sailed in quest of the enemy, having taken on board a number of soldiers and volunteers.

He ran off Long Point, and sweeping the Canada shore for some distance, returned to Erie on the 8th. Taking in some supplies, he was about to sail again, to proceed up the lake, when intelligence arrived that the party sent from below, under Lieutenant Elliott, and which has been previously mentioned, was at Cattaraugus, on its way to join the squadron. A vessel was immediately sent for this acceptable reinforcement. Shortly after its arrival, the commissions that had been made out some time previously, were received from below. By these changes, Mr. Elliott became a master and commander, and Messrs. Holdup, Packett, Yarnall, Edwards, and Conklin, were raised to the rank of lieutenants. Most of these gentlemen, however, had been acting for some months.

The American squadron now consisted of the Lawrence 20, Captain Perry; Niagara 20, Captain Elliott; Caledonia 3, Mr. M'Grath, a purser; Ariel 4, Lieutenant Packett; Trippe 1, Lieutenant Smith; Tigress 1, Lieutenant Conklin; Somers 2, Mr. Almy; Scorpion 2, Mr. Champlin; Ohio 1, Mr. Dobbins; and Porcupine 1, Mr. Senatt. On the 18th of August it sailed from Erie, and off Sandusky, a few days later, it chased, and was near capturing one of the enemy's schooners.

The squadron now cruised for several days near the entrance of the strait, when Captain Perry was taken ill with the fever peculiar to these waters, and shortly after the vessels went into a harbour, among some islands that lay at no great distance, which is called Put-in Bay.

Here some changes occurred, Mr. Smith going to the Niagara, and Mr. Holdup to the Trippe; Mr.

M'Grath went also to the Niagara, and Mr. Turner took command of the Caledonia. The Ohio was sent down the lake on duty.

The squadron was still lying at Put-in Bay, on the morning of the 10th of September, when, at daylight, the enemy's ships were discovered at the N. W., from the mast-head of the Lawrence. A signal was immediately made for all the vessels to get under way. The wind was light at S. W., and there was no mode of obtaining the weather-gage of the enemy, a very important measure with the peculiar armament of the largest of the American vessels, but by beating round some small islands that lay in the way. It being thought there was not sufficient time for this, though the boats were got ahead to tow, a signal was about to be made for the vessels to ware, and to pass to leeward of the islands, with an intention of giving the enemy this great advantage, when the wind shifted to S.E. By this change the American squadron was enabled to pass the islands in the desired direction, and to gain the wind. When he perceived the American vessels clearing the land, or about 10 A.M., the enemy hove-to, in a line, with his ships' heads to the westward. At this time the two squadrons were about three leagues asunder, the breeze being still at S.E., and sufficient to work with. After standing down, until about a league from the English, where a better view was got of the manner in which the enemy had formed his line, the leading vessels of his own squadron being within hail, Captain Perry communicated a new order of attack. It had been expected that the Queen Charlotte, the second of the English vessels, in regard to force, would be at the head of their line, and the Niagara had been destined to lead in, and to lie

against her, Captain Perry having reserved for himself a commander's privilege of engaging the principal vessel of the opposing squadron; but, it now appearing that the anticipated arrangement had not been made, the plan was promptly altered. Captain Barclay had formed his line with the Chippeway, Mr. Campbell, armed with one gun on a pivot, in the van; the Detroit, his own vessel, next; and the Hunter, Lieutenant Bignall; Queen Charlotte, Captain Finnis; Lady Prevost, Lieutenant Com. Buchan; and Little Belt astern, in the order named. To oppose this line, the Ariel, of four long twelves, was stationed in the van, and the Scorpion, of one long and one short gun on circles, next her. The Lawrence, Captain Perry, came next; the two schooners just mentioned keeping on her weather bow, having no quarters. The Caledonia, Lieutenant Turner, was the next astern, and the Niagara, Captain Elliott, was placed next to the Caledonia. These vessels were all up at the time, but the other light craft were more or less distant, each endeavouring to get into her berth. The order of battle for the remaining vessels directed the Tigress to fall in astern of the Niagara, the Somers next, and the Porcupine and Trippe, in the order named.*

By this time the wind had got to be very light, but the leading vessels were all in their stations, and the

* In consequence of neither of the commanding officers having given his order of battle in his published official letter, it is difficult to obtain the stations of some of the smaller vessels. By some accounts, the Lady Prevost is said to have been between the Detroit and the Queen Charlotte, by others, the Hunter. The latter is believed to be the true statement. On the other hand, some accounts place the Somers, and others the Tigress, next astern of the Niagara. The fact is immaterial, but the account which seems to be best authenticated has been chosen.

remainder were endeavouring to get in as fast as possible. At this moment the English vessels presented a very gallant array, and their appearance has been described as beautiful and imposing. Their line was compact, with the heads of the vessels still to the southward and westward; their ensigns were just opening to the air; their vessels were freshly painted, and their canvass was new and perfect. The American line was more straggling. The order of battle required them to form within half a cable's length of each other, but the schooners astern could not close with the vessels ahead, which sailed faster, and had more light canvass, until some considerable time had elapsed.

A few minutes before twelve, the Detroit threw a twenty-four pound shot at the Lawrence, then on her weather-quarter, distant between one and two miles. Captain Perry now passed an order, by the trumpet, through the vessels astern, for the line to close to the prescribed order, and soon after the Scorpion was hailed, and directed to begin with her long guns. At this moment, the American vessels in line were edging down upon the English, those in front being necessarily nearer to the enemy than those astern of them, with the exception of the Ariel and Scorpion, which two schooners had been ordered to keep to windward of the Lawrence. As the Detroit had an armament of long guns, Captain Barclay manifested his judgment in commencing the action in this manner, and in a short time the firing between that ship, the Lawrence, and the two schooners at the head of the American line, became animated. A few minutes later the vessels astern began to fire, and the action became general, but distant. The Lawrence, however, ap-

peared to be the principal aim of the enemy, and before the firing had lasted any material time, the Detroit, Hunter, and Queen Charlote, were directing most of their efforts against her. The American brig endeavoured to close, and did succeed in getting within reach of canister, though not without suffering materially, as she fanned down upon the enemy. At this time, the support of the two schooners ahead, which were well commanded and fought, was of the greatest moment to her, for the vessels astern, though in the line, could be of little use in diverting the fire, on account of their positions and the distance. After the firing had lasted some time, the Niagara hailed the Caledonia, and directed the latter to make room for the brig to pass ahead. Mr. Turner put his helm up in the most dashing manner, and continued to near the enemy, until he was closer to his line, perhaps, than the commanding vessel; keeping up as warm a fire as his small armament would allow. The Niagara now became the vessel next astern of the Lawrence.

The effect of the cannonade was necessarily to deaden the wind, and for nearly two hours there was very little air. During all this time, the weight of the enemy's fire continued to be directed at the Lawrence; even the Queen Charlotte, having filled, passed the Hunter, and got under the stern of the Detroit, where she kept up a destructive cannonade on this devoted vessel. The effect of these united attacks, besides producing a great slaughter on board the Lawrence, was nearly to dismantle her, and, at the end of two hours and a half, agreeably to Captain Perry's report, the British vessels having filled, and the wind beginning to increase, the two squadrons

moved slowly ahead, the Lawrence necessarily dropping astern and partially out of the combat. At this moment the Niagara passed to the westward, a short distance to windward of the Lawrence, steering for the head of the enemy's line, and the Caledonia followed, to leeward.

The vessels astern had not been idle, but, by dint of sweeping and sailing, they had all got within reach of their guns, and had been gradually closing, though not in the prescribed order. The rear of the line would seem to have inclined down towards the enemy, bringing the Trippe, Lieutenant Holdup, so near the Caledonia, that the latter sent a boat to her for a supply of cartridges.

Captain Perry, finding himself in a vessel that had been rendered nearly useless by the injuries she had received, and which was dropping out of the combat, got into his boat, and pulled after the Niagara, on board of which vessel he arrived at about half-past two. Soon after, the colours of the Lawrence were hauled down, that vessel being literally a wreck.

After a short consultation between Captains Perry and Elliott, the latter volunteered to take the boat of the former, and to proceed and bring the small vessels astern, which were already briskly engaged, into still closer action. This proposal being accepted, Captain Elliott pulled down the line, passing within hail of all the small vessels astern, directing them to close within half pistol-shot of the enemy, and to throw in grape and canister, as soon as they could get the desired positions. He then repaired on board the Somers, and took charge of that schooner in person.

When the enemy saw the colours of the Lawrence come down, he confidently believed that he had gained

the day. His men appeared over the bulwarks of the different vessels, and gave three cheers. For a few minutes, indeed, there appears to have been a general cessation in the firing, as if by common consent, during which both parties were preparing for a desperate and final effort. The wind had freshened, and the position of the Niagara, which brig was now abeam of the leading English vessel, was commanding, while the gun-vessels astern, in consequence of the increasing breeze, were enabled to close very fast.

At forty-five minutes past two, or when time had been given to the gun-vessels to receive the order mentioned, Captain Perry showed the signal from the Niagara for close action, and immediately bore up, under his foresail topsails and topgallantsail. As the American vessels hoisted their answering flags, this order was received with three cheers, and it was obeyed with alacrity and spirit. The enemy now attempted to ware round, to get fresh broadsides to bear, in doing which his line got into confusion, and the two ships, for a short time, were foul of each other, while the Lady Prevost had so far shifted her berth, as to be both to the westward and to the leeward of the Detroit. At this critical moment, the Niagara came steadily down, within half pistol shot of the enemy, standing between the Chippeway and Lady Prevost, on one side, and the Detroit, Queen Charlotte, and Hunter, on the other. In passing, she poured in her broadsides, starboard and larboard, ranged ahead of the ships, luffed athwart their bows, and continued delivering a close and deadly fire. The shrieks from the Detroit proved that the tide of battle had turned. At the same moment, the gun-vessels and Caledonia were throwing in close discharges of grape and canister

astern. A conflict so fearfully close, and so deadly, was necessarily short. In fifteen or twenty minutes after the Niagara bore up, a hail was passed among the small vessels, to say that the enemy had struck, and an officer of the Queen Charlotte appeared on the taffrail of that ship, waving a white handkerchief, bent to a boarding pike.

As soon as the smoke cleared away, the two squadrons were found partly intermingled. The Niagara lay to leeward of the Detroit, Queen Charlotte, and Hunter; and the Caledonia, with one or two of the gun-vessels, was between them and the Lady Prevost. On board the Niagara, the signal for close action was still abroad, while the small vessels were sternly wearing their answering flags. The Little Belt and Chippeway were endeavouring to escape to leeward, but they were shortly after brought to by the Scorpion and Trippe; while the Lawrence was lying astern and to windward, with the American colours again flying. The battle had commenced about noon, and it terminated at three, with the exception of a few shots fired at the two vessels that attempted to escape, which were not overtaken until an hour later.

In this decisive action the two squadrons suffered in nearly an equal degree, so far as their people were concerned; the manner in which the Lawrence was cut up being almost without an example in naval warfare. It is understood that when Captain Perry left her, she had but one gun on her starboard side, or that on which she was engaged, which could be used, and that gallant officer is said to have aided in firing it in person, the last time it was discharged. Of her crew twenty-two were killed, and sixty-one were wounded, most of the latter severely. When

Captain Perry left her, taking with him four of his people, there remained on board but fifteen sound men. The Niagara had two killed and twenty-five wounded, or about one-fourth of all at quarters. The other vessels suffered relatively less. The Caledonia, Lieutenant Turner, though carried into the hottest of the action, and entirely without quarters, had three men wounded; the Trippe, Lieutenant Holdup,* which for some time was quite as closely engaged, and was equally without quarters, had two men wounded; the Somers, Mr. Almy, the same; the Ariel, Lieutenant Packett, had one killed and three wounded; the Scorpion, Mr. Champlin, had two killed, one of whom was a midshipman; the Tigress, Lieutenant Conklin, and Porcupine, Mr. Senatt, had no one hurt. The total loss of the squadron was twenty-seven killed, and ninety-six wounded, or altogether one hundred and twenty-three men; of whom twelve were quarter-deck officers. More than a hundred men were unfit for duty among the different vessels, previous to the action, cholera morbus and dysentery prevailing in the squadron. Captain Perry himself was labouring under debility, from a recent attack of the late fever, and could hardly be said to be in a proper condition for service when he met the enemy,—a circumstance that greatly enhances the estimate of his personal exertions, on this memorable occasion. Among the American slain were Lieutenant Brooks, the commanding marine officer, and Messrs. Laub and Clark, midshipmen; and among the wounded, Messrs. Yarnall and Forrest, the first and second lieutenants of the Lawrence, Mr. Taylor,

* Now Captain Holdup Stevens.

her master, and Messrs. Swartwout and Claxton, two of her midshipmen. Mr. Edwards, second lieutenant of the Niagara, and Mr. Cummings, one of her midshipmen, were also wounded.

For two hours the weight of the enemy's fire had been thrown into the Lawrence; and the water being perfectly smooth, his long guns had committed great havoc before the carronades of the American vessels could be made available. For much of this period it is believed that the efforts of the enemy were little diverted, except by the fire of the two leading schooners, a gun of one of which (the Ariel) had early bursted, the two long guns of the brigs, and the two long guns of the Caledonia. Although the enemy undoubtedly suffered by this fire, it was not directed at a single object, as was the case with that of the English, who appeared to think, that by destroying the American commanding vessel they would conquer. It is true, that the carronades were used on both sides, at an earlier stage of the action than that mentioned, but there is good reason for thinking that they did but little execution for the first hour. When they did tell, the Lawrence, the vessel nearest to the enemy, if the Caledonia be excepted, necessarily became their object, and by this time the efficiency of her battery was much lessened. As a consequence of these peculiar circumstances, her starboard bulwarks were nearly beaten in; and even her larboard were greatly injured, many of the enemy's heavy shot passing through both sides; while every gun was finally disabled in the batteries fought. Although much has been justly said of the manner in which the Bon Homme Richard and the Essex were injured, neither of these ships suffered, relatively, in a degree proportioned to the Lawrence.

Distinguished as were the two former vessels, for the indomitable resolution with which they withstood the destructive fire directed against them, it did not surpass that manifested on board the Lawrence; and it ought to be mentioned, that throughout the whole of this trying day, her people, who had been so short a time acting together, manifested a steadiness and discipline worthy of veterans.

Although the Niagara suffered in a much less degree, twenty-seven men killed and wounded, in a ship's company that mustered little more than one hundred souls at quarters, under ordinary circumstances, would be thought a large proportion. Neither the Niagara nor any of the smaller vessels were injured in an unusual manner in their hulls, spars, and sails, the enemy having expended so much of his efforts against the Lawrence, and being so soon silenced when that brig and gun-vessels got their raking positions, at the close of the conflict.

The injuries sustained by the English were more divided, but were necessarily great. According to the official report of Captain Barclay, his vessels lost forty-one killed and ninety-four wounded, making a total of one hundred and thirty-five, including twelve officers, the precise number lost by the Americans. No report has been published in which the loss of the respective vessels was given, but the Detroit had her first lieutenant killed, and her commander, Captain Barclay, with her purser, wounded. Captain Finnis, of the Queen Charlotte, was also slain, and her first lieutenant was wounded. The commanding officer and first lieutenant of the Lady Prevost were among the wounded, as were the commanding officers of the Hunter and Chippeway. All of their vessels were a

good deal injured in their sails and hulls; the Queen Charlotte suffering most in proportion. Both the Detroit and Queen Charlotte, however, rolled the masts out of them, at anchor at Put-in-Bay, in a gale of wind, two days after the action.

It is not easy to make a just comparison between the forces of the hostile squadrons, on this occasion. Under some circumstances the Americans would have been materially superior, while in others the enemy might possess the advantage in perhaps an equal degree. In those under which the action was actually fought, the peculiar advantages and disadvantages were nearly equalised, the lightness of the wind preventing either of the two largest of the American vessels from profiting by their peculiar mode of efficiency, until quite near the close of the engagement, and particularly favouring the armament of the Detroit; while the smoothness of the water rendered the light vessels of the Americans very destructive, as soon as they could be got within a proper range. The Detroit has been represented, on good authority, to be both a heavier and stronger ship than either of the American brigs, and the Queen Charlotte proved to be a much finer vessel than had been expected; while the Lady Prevost was found to be a large, warlike schooner. It was, perhaps, unfortunate for the enemy that the armaments of these two vessels were not available under the circumstances which rendered the Detroit so efficient, as it destroyed the unity of their efforts. In short, the battle, for near half its duration, appears to have been fought, so far as efficiency was concerned, by the long guns of the two squadrons. This was particularly favouring the Detroit and the American gun-vessels, while the latter fought under the advan-

tage of smooth water, and the disadvantage of having no quarters. The sides of the Detroit, which were unusually stout, were filled with shot that did not penetrate.*

In the number of men at quarters, there could have been no great disparity in the two squadrons. Mr. Yarnall, the first lieutenant of the Lawrence, testified before a court of inquiry, in 1815, that the brig to which he belonged had but "one hundred and thirty-one men and boys, of every description," on board her, and that of these but one hundred and three were fit for duty in the action. The Niagara was nearly in the same state. A part of the crews of all the vessels belonged to the militia. Indeed, without a large proportion of volunteers from the army, the battle could not have been fought. The British were no better off, having a considerable proportion of soldiers on board their vessels, though men of that description were probably as efficient in smooth water, and under the actual circumstances, as ordinary sailors. Stress was laid, at the time, on the fact that a portion of the British crews were provincials; but the history of this continent is filled with instances in which men of their character have gained battles, that went to increase the renown of the mother country, without obtaining any credit for it. The hardy frontier men of the American lakes are as able to endure fatigue as ready to engage, and as constant in battle as the seamen of any marine in the world. All that they require is good

* The larboard side of the Detroit is stated to have had so many shot sticking in it, and so many mere indentations, that doubts have been suggested as to the quality of the American powder. It is probable, however, the circumstance arose from the distance, which, for a long time, was not within fair carronade range, especially with grape or canister, over round shot.

leaders, and these the English appear to have possessed in Captain Barclay and his assistants.

Captain Perry, in his report of the action, eulogized the conduct of his second in command, Captain Elliott, of Mr. Turner, who commanded the Caledonia, and of the officers of his own vessel. He also commended the officers of the Niagara, Mr. Packett of the Ariel, and Mr. Champlin of the Scorpion. It is now believed that the omission of the names of the commanders of the gun-vessels astern was accidental. It would seem that these vessels, in general, were conducted with great gallantry. Towards the close of the action, indeed, the Caledonia and some of the gun-vessels would appear to have been handled with a boldness, considering their total want of quarters, bordering on temerity. They are known to have been within hail of the enemy at the moment he struck, and to have been hailed by him. The grape and canister thrown by the Niagara and the schooners, during the last ten minutes of the battle, and which missed the enemy, rattled through the spars of the friendly vessels that lay opposite to each other, raking the English ahead and astern.

Captain Perry was criticised, at the time, for the manner in which he had brought his squadron into action, it being thought he should have waited until his line was more compactly formed, and his small vessels could have closed. It has been said, that "an officer seldom went into action worse, or got out of it better." Truth is too often made the sacrifice of antithesis. The mode of attack appears to have been deemed by the enemy judicious, an opinion that speaks in its favour. The lightness of the wind, in edging down, was the only circumstance that was particularly

adverse to the American vessels, but its total failure could not have been foreseen. The shortness of the distances on the lake rendered escape so easy, when an officer was disposed to avoid a battle, that no commander, who desired an action, would have been pardonable for permitting a delay on such a plea. The line of battle was highly judicious, the manner in which the Lawrence was supported by the Ariel and Scorpion being simple and ingenious. By steering for the head of the enemy's line, the latter was prevented from gaining the wind by tacking, and when Captain Elliott imitated this manœuvre in the Niagara, the American squadron had a very commanding position, of which Captain Perry promptly availed himself. In a word, the American commander appears to have laid his plan with skill and judgment, and, in all in which it was frustrated, it would seem to have been the effect of accident. There has never been but one opinion of the manner in which he redeemed his error, even admitting that a fault was made at the outset; the united movements of the Niagara and of the small vessels, at the close of the action, having been as judicious as they were gallant and decisive. The personal deportment of Captain Perry, throughout the day, was worthy of all praise.*

* Popular opinion, which is too apt to confound distinctions in such matters, usually attaches the idea of more gallantry to the mere act of passing in a boat from one vessel to another, during the action, than in fighting on a vessel's deck. This was the least of Perry's merits. Captain Elliott was much longer in the same boat, and passed nearly through the whole line twice; and Mr. M'Grath had left the Niagara for one of the other vessels, in quest of shot, before Captain Perry quitted the Lawrence, A boat, also, passed twice, if not three times, from the Caledonia to the Trippe in the height of the engagement, and others, quite likely, were sent from vessel to vessel. Captain Perry's merit was an indomitable resolution not to be conquered, and the manner in which he sought new

He did not quit his own vessel when she became useless, to retire from the battle, but to gain it; an end that was fully obtained, and which resulted in a triumph.

The British vessels appear to have been gallantly fought, and were surrendered only when the battle was hopelessly lost. The fall of their different commanders was materially against them, though it is not probable the day could have been recovered after the Niagara gained the head of their line and the gun-vessels had closed. If the enemy made an error, it was in not tacking when he attempted to ware, but it is quite probable that the condition of his vessels did not admit of the former manœuvre. There was an instant when the enemy believed himself the conqueror, and a few minutes even, when the Americans doubted, though they never despaired; but a moment sufficed to change these feelings, teaching the successful the fickleness of fortune, and admonishing the depressed of the virtue of perseverance.*

For his conduct in this battle, Captain Perry received a gold medal from Congress. Captain Elliott also received a gold medal. Rewards were bestowed on the officers and men generally, and the nation has

modes of victory, when the old ones failed him. The position taken by the Niagara at the close of the affair, the fact that he sought the best means of repairing his loss, and the *motive* with which he passed from vessel to vessel, constitute his claims to admiration. There was, no doubt, a personal risk in all the boats, but there was personal risk everywhere on such an occasion.

* When the Detroit was taken possession of, the boarding officer went into the cabin, where he found Captain Barclay suffering under his wound, but still flushed and excited. "You are sent for my sword, Sir?" he cried. "No, Sir, I have come to take possession of the ship." "Well, Sir," continued Captain Barclay, "I would not have given sixpence for your squadron when I left the deck!"

long considered this action one of its proudest achievements on the water.

The results of the victory was instantaneous and of high importance. The four smallest of the prizes were fitted as transports, and, the Lawrence excepted, the American squadron was employed in the same duty. The English had evacuated Detroit, and with it Michigan, and on the 23d of September the squadron conveyed a body of twelve hundred men to the vicinity of Malden, in Upper Canada, of which they took possession, and on the 27th Captain Perry ascended to Detroit in the Ariel, and reoccupied that town in conjunction with the army. A day or two later, Captain Elliott, with the Niagara, Lady Prevost, Scorpion, and Tigress, went into Lake St. Clair, to cut off the enemy's baggage. On the 2d of October a part of the vessels assembled at the mouth of the Thames, with stores for the army, and, as the latter advanced, Captain Elliott ascended the stream, with the Scorpion, Porcupine, and Tigress, until he reached a point where the banks of the river rendered it too hazardous, by exposing the vessels to the fire of the Indians. The battle of the Moravian Towns was fought on the 5th of the same month, when the savages received a severe rebuke, and nearly the whole of the right wing of the British army in the Canadas laid down their arms on the field, under a charge of the American mounted volunteers. After this success, which placed most of the upper part of the province in the hands of the conquerors, the vessels were employed in bringing away the ammunition and other captured stores. October 18th, General Harrison and Captain Perry, the latter of whom had been present at the battle on shore, issued a joint proclamation, for the

better government of the conquered territory, assuring to the people their ancient laws and usages, and the rights of property.

On the 23d of October the squadron transported the army of General Harrison to Buffalo, and on the 25th Captain Perry resigned the command of the upper lakes to Captain Elliott, repairing himself to the seaboard. November 29th, this gallant and successful officer received the commission of a captain, which was dated on the day of the victory, and soon after he was appointed to the command of the Java 44, a new frigate, then fitting for sea at Baltimore.*

* There is a letter on file in the Navy Department, in which Captain Perry, who had only been a commander about a year, expresses some doubts of the propriety of accepting this rank over the heads of his seniors, and his readiness to yield to their claims.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vessels on the Stocks—Brigs launched—Futile attempt—English crusing force—Fort Oswego—The fort stormed—Reinforcements—Brigade of boats—Gallant exploit—Launch of the Mohawk—Critical moment—American squadron—Blockade of Kingston—A gale—The St. Lawrence.

The winter of 1813—14 was passed at Sackett's Harbour and Kingston in building vessels for the ensuing summer, and in vigilant watchfulness, lest the opposing force might attempt to obtain the command of the lake by a *coup de main*, struck at the vessels while on the stocks. Kingston had been made very strong by means of works, while the fortifications at the Harbour were of little moment. As the lake was frozen from one place to the other, and sleighs could pass in a few hours, the Americans were kept constantly on the alert to guard against a surprise. The dispositions of Com. Chauncey, for this purpose, were of the most judicious nature; and they so far commanded the respect of the enemy, that, though bent on the enterprise, he never presumed to hazard the attempt.

In February three vessels were laid down at the Harbour, a frigate of fifty guns, and two large brigs,

pierced for twenty-two guns each. As the English were known to be building extensively, the timber was also got out for a second frigate. Com. Chauncey had been absent at the seat of government, and it was near the end of the month when he returned to the Harbour, where he found that Captain Crane, his second in command, and Mr. Eckford, the builder, had been very active during his absence. Early in March many deserters came in, and they agreed in stating that the largest of the enemy's new ships, which had been laid down the previous autumn, was caulked and decked, and that she was pierced for sixty guns. A third ship was also said to be in preparation. In consequence of this intelligence, the size of the first American frigate was increased materially. March 26th, the important information was obtained that the enemy had actually laid down a two-decked vessel of unusual dimensions. Thus did those inland waters, on which, until quite lately, nothing had ever floated larger than a sloop of war, bid fair to witness the evolutions of fleets!

During the whole of this winter the sickness at the Harbour was of the gravest character. For five months there was never less than half of the crew of the Madison on the sick list, and she actually buried about one fifth of her people.

On the 7th of April one of the new brigs was launched, and was called the Jefferson. Still the guns, which had left New York two months previously, had not even reached Albany. The other brig was launched on the 10th, and was called the Jones. Not a man or gun, however, had yet arrived for either vessel. April the 11th, the enemy

was ascertained to be in the stream, with all his vessels of the previous year, ready to go out, and on the 14th he put his two frigates into the water. The Lady of the Lake was sent out to watch the motions of the English, as soon as the state of the ice permitted. About the close of this month, the operations on Ontario having become so important, and the distances being so great, Com. Chauncey was relieved from the command of the upper lakes, Captain Sinclair, late of the Pike, being named his successor. At the same time, Captain Elliott was ordered to Ontario, and was appointed to the Sylph, Captain Woolsey being transferred to the Jones. The armament of the former vessel, which had proved so inefficient the previous summer, was also altered to sixteen twenty-four pound carronades, in regular broadside, and she was rigged into a brig.

April 25th, a guard-boat, under the command of Lieutenant Dudley, detected three boats in the offing, and immediately fired into them. The strangers did not return the fire, but pulled swiftly away. Obtaining a reinforcement, Mr. Dudley gave chase, but could not again fall in with the suspicious party. The next day there was a close search, and at the spot where the strangers received the fire of the guard-boat, six barrels of gunpowder were found in the lake, slung in such a manner, that one man might carry two at a time across his shoulders. They had fuse holes, and were, no doubt, intended to blow up the frigate. Had the adventurers got into the ship-yard, they must have been foiled, as a lieutenant, two midshipmen, and ten men, were every night on watch, under the ship. The Madison was moored so as to rake beneath her

bottom, with her guns loaded with musket balls. There were also double lines of sentinels without, and booms in the water.

About this time, when so much depended on the exertions of the builders, one of the most respectable of the shipwrights, through some misunderstanding, was killed by a sentinel, and all the carpenters on the station, who were entirely masters of their own acts, instantly struck work. The most disastrous consequences, for a short time, appeared inevitable; but owing to the energy of Mr. Eckford, sustained by the influence of the commodore, the feelings of these men were soothed, and they returned to their labour.

The command of the lake was now thought so important, by both belligerents, that many ships were laid up on the ocean, in order to transfer their officers and crews to this service; and on the part of the Americans, twenty-five per cent. was added to the pay of all employed on it. It is believed that the enemy made some similar provision.

On the 2d of May the American frigate was launched, and she was called the Superior. Another, of less size, was immediately laid down on her blocks. The guns began to arrive at the Harbour about the beginning of May, though the heaviest were still finding their way through the imperfect navigation of the Mohawk and Wood Creek, towards Oswego. On the 4th, the Lady of the Lake, Lieutenant Gregory, saw six sail of the enemy coming out of Kingston, about dusk, steering towards Amherst Bay; and on the 5th, the latter appeared off Oswego, with seven sail. The greatest exertions were now made to get the Pike, Madison, Jefferson, Sylph,

and Oneida, ready to follow him, these being all the vessels that had their armaments, the small schooners being now pretty generally abandoned as cruisers, on account of their qualities, and converted into transports. But a report was received from Captain Woolsey, then on duty at Oswego, that one of the new frigates was certainly in the enemy's squadron, and Mr. Gregory brought in information that he had seen the other off the Ducks the same day, when Com. Chauncey abandoned the intention to go out, the great superiority of the English putting a battle out of the question.

The active cruising force under Sir James Yeo consisted of the Prince Regent 58, Captain O'Conner, the flag-ship, armed with long heavy guns, sixty-eight and thirty-two-pound carronades, and containing near five hundred men; the Princess Charlotte 42, Captain Mulcaster, having guns nearly or quite as heavy, and between three and four hundred men; the Montreal, (late Wolfe,) Captain Downie; the Niagara, (late Royal George,) Captain Popham; the Charwell, (late Moira,) Lieutenant Dobbs; Magnet, (late Sidney Smith,) the Star, (late Melville,) Captain Clover; and the Netley, (late Beresford,) Lieutenant Owens. It was evident that nothing less than very heavy frigates could lie against the largest of these vessels.

Captain Woolsey had been sent to Oswego, to transport to the Harbour the heavy guns, cables, &c. of the two new frigates, most of which had reached the falls, twelve miles above the town, where they were kept for the sake of security, until the schooners could be loaded, and despatched singly. The Growler was in the river with that object, when Sir James

Yeo, as mentioned, appeared in the offing. He was about to make a descent, with a body of troops, on the 5th, but the weather induced him to defer the enterprise. On this occasion there was some firing, and the enemy abandoned an empty boat or two. The succeeding day, however, everything being favourable, the original design was resumed.

Oswego was then a village containing less than five hundred souls, and was without any regular fortifications. There had been a fort of some size, however, when the colonies belonged to the English, and the ruins of this work stood on an elevated plain, at the point of land on the side of the river opposite to the village. The works were tolerably large, but had never been strong. They were merely mounds of earth, with bastions of the same material, dry ditches of no great depth, a natural glacis, pickets, ramparts, and a few insignificant outworks. The American government permitted them to go to decay, and as there was no masonry, the ditch had nearly filled, the ramparts had worn down, the pickets and palisadoes had decayed, and even the gate and the barracks had disappeared. After the declaration of war, regiments frequently remained at this point, for weeks at a time, on their way to the seat of hostilities, the spot being public property, and offering facilities for disciplining troops, it had been selected as their temporary abode. Rude barracks had been constructed, and a gate was built. Some other trifling repairs may have been made, an imperfect picketing was set up, but the ditches and ramparts might still have been crossed, at many places, on horseback. In short, as a mere field-work, with a sufficiency of men, this titular fort

might have been formidable; it offered many facilities for cannonading in the offing, and commanded the river in a degree proportioned to the number of men and guns that might happen to be in it; but, as against a superior force, in a serious fight, it could be of no essential service, and nothing was easier than to storm it, a siege being quite unnecessary. In short, it was no longer a fort, in the real signification of the term, nor was it ranked among the fortifications of the country, even the right of property having been transferred to the state of New York.

At the moment when Sir James Yeo appeared, a battalion of light cavalry, consisting of two hundred and ninety effectives, under Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell, was at Fort Oswego, and but a few militia had been called in, the adjacent country, for a distance of forty miles, being little more than a wilderness. It would trespass on another branch of the subject, minutely to relate the affair that followed. Lieutenant-General Drummond commanded the English troops, and the two services united, disembarked with a force that has been differently computed at from one thousand to eighteen hundred men. The ships opened a heavy fire, and a landing was effected. Lieutenant-Colonel Mitchell, who had less than four hundred men, and but two serviceable heavy guns, met the enemy at the shore, and fought him, as long as was at all prudent, in the woods and on the plain, when he fell back towards the falls, as a retreat into the fort would have ensured his capture. Had the latter been in repair, less than one thousand men could not have prevented it from being stormed, on account of its size. The defence, though hopeless from the first, was very spirited, and

the enemy admitted a loss of ninety-five men, though it was thought to have been materially larger. The Americans lost six killed, thirty-eight wounded, and twenty-five missing, or sixty-nine in all. Lieutenant Pearce, and a few seamen present, fell into, and fought bravely, in the ranks of the soldiers. The Growler, the only transport in port, was sunk as soon as the landing was effected.

The enemy remained two days at Oswego, where they raised the Growler, and carried her off; this making the third time that vessel had been taken during the last year. But few stores were found in the village, however, the orders of Com. Chauncey having required that they should be kept at the falls, until the vessels were ready to sail with them. On the whole, the English derived very little advantage from this descent, and the Americans suffered scarcely any injury, besides the killed and wounded. The navy lost several guns in the Growler, with a few shot and a little rigging. On the part of the enemy, Captain Mulcaster, of the Princess Charlotte, an officer of great gallantry, who had landed with a brigade of seamen, was badly wounded. The conduct of Lieutenant-Colonel Mitchell was highly approved, and was thought to have been marked by steadiness and courage.

Sir James Yeo now returned to Kingston, landed the troops, and on the 19th he came out and chased the Lady of the Lake into the harbour, off which place he appeared with four ships and three brigs, blockading the port, for the first and only time during the war. At this moment, many of the stores, and some of the lighter guns, of which the direction had been changed, in consequence of the descent, were

coming in by land, though the heavy guns and cables still remained in the Oswego river.

About the middle of May, reinforcements of officers and men began to arrive from the sea-board. The Macedonian had been laid up in the Thames, and Mr. Rodgers, her first lieutenant, with her crew, came in between the 11th and the 21st. Captain Elliott rejoined the station on the 12th, and Captain Trenchard on the 15th. The Erie, a new sloop of war, then blockaded at Baltimore, had been also laid up, and her commander, Captain Ridgley, with his people, arrived some time before, and had been put on board the Jefferson.

Notwithstanding all the exertions that had been made in building, the ships were useless without guns and cables, and most of those intended for the two frigates had yet to be transported to the harbour by water, their weight and the state of the roads rendering other means too costly and difficult. Captain Woolsey, who was still entrusted with this duty, caused reports to be circulated that the heavy articles were to be sent back to the Oneida lake, and when time had been allowed for the enemy to receive this information, he ran the guns over the falls, and at sunset, on the 28th of May, he reached Oswego with nineteen boats, loaded with twenty-one long thirty-two pounders, ten twenty-four pounders, three forty-two pound carronades, and ten cables. The look-outs having reported the coast clear, the brigade of boats rowed out of the river at dusk, and after passing a dark and rainy night at the oars, reached the mouth of Big Salmon River at sunrise on the 29th, one boat having unaccountably disappeared.

Captain Woolsey was accompanied by a detach-

ment of one hundred and thirty riflemen, under Major Appling, and at the Big Salmon he also met a party of Oneida Indians, which had been directed to follow on the shore. The brigade now proceeded, entered Big Sandy Creek, and ascended about two miles, to its place of destination; the blockade rendering it necessary to convey the supplies by land the remainder of the distance.

At this time the English squadron lay at anchor, a few miles from the Harbour, and the missing boat had gone ahead, in the professed hope of making the whole distance by water. Seeing the English ships, either by mistake or treachery it pulled directly for them, under a belief, real or pretended, that they were Americans. It is thought, however, that the people in the boat were deceived.

From the prisoners Sir James Yeo learned the situation of the remainder of the brigade. He had three gun-boats on the station, and Captain Popham, of the Montreal, was put into one, and Captain Spilsbury into the other, having three cutters and a gig in company. After cruising without success, separately, the two parties joined, and having ascertained that the brigade had entered Sandy Creek, they followed on the 30th, with the expectation of capturing it. Major Appling, being apprised of the approach of the enemy, placed his riflemen, supported by the Indians, in ambush, about half a mile below the place where Captain Woolsey was discharging the stores. The enemy had a party of marines on board, under two lieutenants of that corps. These, in conjunction with a body of seamen, were landed, and the gun-boats approached, throwing grape and canister into the bushes, with a view to feel their way. Major Appling

permitted the enemy to get quite near, when he threw in a close discharge of the rifle. The resistance was trifling, and in ten minutes the whole of the English demanded quarter. The enemy had a midshipman and fourteen seamen and marines killed, and two lieutenants of marines, with twenty-six common men wounded. In addition to the wounded, there were made a sufficient number of prisoners to raise his total loss to one hundred and eighty-six. All the boats were taken, the three gun-vessels carrying eighty-six, twenty-four, eighteen, and twelve pound carronades. Among the prisoners were Captains Popham and Spilsbury, four sea lieutenants, and two midshipmen. Although there was a considerable force a short distance above, without the range of the rifle, the command of Major Appling, which effected this handsome exploit, was scarcely equal to the enemy in numbers, and yet he had but a single man wounded. This little success was the effect of a surprise and an ambush.

It will aid in giving a better idea of the condition of this frontier at that time, as well as in proving the ardour with which the duty was conducted, if we state, that when the stores in charge of Captain Woolsey were landed, a frigate's cable was carried from Sandy Creek to the harbour, a distance of eight miles, on the shoulders of a party of sailors.

Most of the Superior's guns having now arrived, the enemy, who was well informed of all that passed on shore, raised the blockade on the 6th of June. Sir James Yeo, who had lately kept two brigs cruising between Oswego and the harbour, joined them with the rest of the squadron, and they all disappeared in company, steering to the north-west. Two days later

the last of the guns actually reached Sackett's Harbour. The frigate, which had been laid down on the blocks of the Superior, was launched on the 11th of June, having been put into the water in thirty-four working days, from the time her keel was laid. She was named the Mohawk. Still the squadron was five hundred men short of its complement, though the crew of the Congress 38, which was undergoing extensive repairs, at Portsmouth, N. H., had been ordered to this service. About the middle of the month the latter began to arrive. The enemy also continued to reinforce both his army and his marine, two hundred boats at a time having been observed passing up the St. Lawrence.

About the middle of this month, Com. Chauncey sent Act. Lieutenant Gregory, with three gigs, into the St. Lawrence, where the enemy had a line of gun-boats, to cover the passage of his supplies and reinforcements, with directions to surprise some of his boats loaded with stores, and, if possible, to destroy them. For this purpose Mr. Gregory lay in ambush on one of the islands, but was discovered by the look-outs of the enemy, who immediately despatched a gun-boat in chase. Instead of retiring before this force, Mr. Gregory determined to become the assailant, and he dashed at the gun-boat, carrying her without the loss of a man. This vessel had an eighteen pound carronade, and a crew of eighteen men. While proceeding up the river with his prize, Mr. Gregory was chased by a much larger boat, mounting two guns, and pulling a great number of oars, which compelled him to scuttle and abandon her. On this occasion, Mr. Gregory was accompanied by Messrs. Vaughan and Dixon, two gallant mariners

of the lake, and he brought in nearly as many prisoners as he had men.

Ten days later, Mr. Gregory was sent with two gigs, accompanied as before by Messrs. Vaughan and Dixon, to Nicholas Island, near Presque Isle, to intercept some transports, failing of which he was to land at Presque Isle, where the enemy had a cruiser, intended to mount fourteen guns, nearly ready to launch, and to endeavour to destroy her. This duty, after running much risk, and suffering greatly from hunger, was effectually performed by the party, which was absent near a week. The day after his return from this expedition, Mr. Gregory received the commission of a lieutenant, that had been conferred on him for the handsome manner in which he had captured the gun-boat.

Unfortunately, at this period, while the squadron was fitting for the lake, and so much remained to be done to render it efficient, Com. Chauncey, who was subjected to great exhaustion of mind and body, fell ill of the prevalent fever, and for the entire month of July was confined to his bed. This was at the critical moment when General Brown had commenced that series of brilliant battles on the Niagara, which, by bringing the disciplined troops of America against those of England, established the high reputation with which the army, after all its early reverses, came out of the war of 1812. Although the duty at the Harbour proceeded, it necessarily suffered for the want of the mind which had planned it, and whose resources had been so amply proved to be equal to the effort of creating a fleet in a forest.

It had been hoped that the squadron would be ready to go out by the middle of July, but so many of

the mechanics were taken ill, also, that it was found impossible to get the Mohawk ready before the 25th. At this time, Com. Chauncey, rather than delay the departure of the vessels, was about to yield the command temporarily to the officer next in rank, but being convalescent, and a change of crews having become indispensable, on account of the wish of the men to serve under their proper officers, three or four days were occupied in effecting these important alterations. On the afternoon of the 31st of July, the commodore was carried on board the Superior, and the American squadron sailed. Its force consisted of the Superior 62, Lieutenant Elton, Com. Chauncey; Mohawk 42, Captain Jones; Pike 28, Captain Crane; Madison 24, Captain Trenchard; Jefferson 22, Captain Ridgley; Jones 22, Captain Woolsey; Sylph 14, Captain Elliott; Oneida 16, Lieutenant Com. Brown, and the Lady of the Lake, look-out vessel—most of the small schooners having now been abandoned as cruisers in squadron. There is no question that this force, which, with the exception of the Oneida, was composed of efficient vessels, was superior to that of the English, who were striving to regain the ascendency, by constructing, as fast as possible, the two-decker already mentioned. The Americans, who had momentarily exhausted their means, under the disadvantages of bad roads, sickly mechanics, and their great distance by land from their supplies, were disposed to trust to the chances of the season, hoping that a victory might prevent the necessity of again building; for, it should be remembered, in order to appreciate the efforts of the two belligerents, that the Americans, besides contending with the effects of a country just cleared of its timber, an evil from which

the enemy was exempt at Kingston, had to build even the town that had grown up at the Harbour, in order to supply the common necessaries of life.*

Com. Chauncey, whose health rapidly improved in the pure air of the lake, appeared off the Niagara, now by the vicissitudes of war again in the possession of the English, on the 5th of August. The enemy's squadron was separated at the moment, his large vessels being down the lake, while many of his small cruisers had been convoying or transporting troops and stores near the head. As the American vessels approached, they intercepted one of the English brigs, which was conveying troops from York to Niagara, and she was chased ashore about two leagues to the westward of Fort George. The Sylph, Captain Elliott, was ordered to run in and destroy her, but just as the former was about to anchor, the enemy set fire to their brig, and she soon after blew up. This vessel is believed to have been called the Charwell, and to have mounted fourteen guns.

The enemy having two cruising brigs and a schooner in the Niagara, both sides of which river were now in his possession by the capture of Fort Niagara, Com. Chauncey left the Jefferson, Sylph, and Oneida to watch them, under the orders of Captain Ridgley of the former vessel, and, looking into York to ascertain if any portion of the British force was there, he went off Kingston, where he arrived on the 9th. One of the English ships was in the offing, and was chased

* It is said that one of the greatest wants of the English was ship timber, the age of Kingston, and the practice of exporting it to England, having nearly stripped the north shore. On the other hand, one of the largest of the American vessels was literally laid down in the forest.

into port by the American squadron, as it arrived. The next day, the Jones, Captain Woolsey, was sent to cruise between Oswego and the Harbour; and the Conquest, one of the best of the schooners, which had been kept armed for any light service that might offer, was employed on the same duty, the enemy having intercepted some flour that was passing, by means of boats.

From this time, until the month of October, or for six weeks uninterruptedly, Com. Chauncey continued a close blockade of Sir James Yeo in Kingston, having undisputed command of the entire lake. With a view to tempt the English to come out, he kept only four vessels in the offing, and as the enemy had an equal number, it was thought the provocation might induce him to risk a battle. Some guns were also sent ashore, with a view to bring the vessels as near as possible to an equality. The American ships were the Superior 58,* Mohawk 42, Pike 28, and Madison 24; the British, the Prince Regent 58, Princess Charlotte 42, Wolfe 25, and Niagara 24. There was also a large schooner at Kingston, with several gun-boats and smaller vessels. It is probable that there was a trifling superiority on the part of the Americans notwithstanding, for in a conflict between vessels of so much force, the smaller craft could be of no great moment, but it was such a superiority as the enemy had long been accustomed to disregard; and the result showed that the American marine commanded his respect to a degree which rendered the minutest calculations of force necessary. Once or twice, the brigs joined the American commodore, in quest of supplies, but they were always sent away

* Four guns having been landed.

again, in order to keep but four ships on the station. The Sylph was ordered off Presque Isle to intercept boats passing in-shore, and the rest of the vessels were kept on the south coast, between the Harbour and the Niagara.

In the course of the month of August, Major-General Izard wrote to Com. Chauncey, to inquire what means of transportation he could afford his division, the former being ordered to march from Plattsburg to reinforce the army on the Niagara. In his answer, the latter stated that he could furnish four ships, four brigs, and seven schooners, the first eight mounting from fourteen to fifty-eight guns; and the latter acting as transports, being from forty to ninety tons burthen. In a few days, however, he should have at his command fifteen barges that were seventy-five feet long each, and which would mount two guns a-piece, having been built expressly to convey troops and stores.

On the 20th of August, the blockading ships were driven off by a gale, and on regaining their station on the 25th, the enemy could not be seen in port. Lieutenant Gregory, with Mr. Hart, a midshipman, was now sent in, in a gig, to reconnoitre. While on this duty, Mr. Gregory landed to set fire to a raft of picket-timber that he accidentially passed. This deviation from the direct route brought the gig so near in-shore, that two barges of the enemy, carrying thirty men, were enabled to head it, as it doubled a point. A chase and a sharp fire of musketry ensued, Mr. Gregory persevering in his attempt to escape, until Mr. Hart was killed, and five men out of eight were wounded, when this enterprising officer was obliged to surrender.

September 5th, the four ships were still blockading Kingston; the Jefferson and Jones were off the Niagara, under Captain Ridgley; the Sylph and Conquest off Presque Isle, under Captain Elliott; and the Oneida was dismantling at the Harbour, the armament of that brig being put into the barges. On the 11th, the wind came from the northward, when Com. Chauncey stood in towards Kingston, and brought-to, just without the drop of the shot from the batteries, and the ships hoisted their ensigns, as a challenge for the enemy to come out. The English sprang their broadsides to bear, set their colours, but did not accept the defiance. It was now seen that the two-decker was launched, and she was ascertained to be very large. After remaining close in for a considerable time, the American ships filled and gained an offing.*

* On this occasion, the hostile vessels were so near each other, that, by the aid of a glass, an American prisoner, then on board the Prince Regent, distinctly recognised Commodore Chauncey standing in the gang-way of the Superior, and pointed him out to the English officers. There is no question that the latter were much mortified at their situation, which was more probably the result of rigid instructions, than of any prudence on their part. It is said, on good authority, that some of the captains who were then on board the Prince Regent, did not hesitate to express their feelings, affirming it was a new thing for an English squadron to be blockaded by a force but little, if any, superior. Sir James Yeo, who probably felt the painful character of his situation as much as any man in his fleet, on hearing these remarks, is said to have dashed his spy-glass over the breech of a gun, and to have retired to his cabin. Of the precise force of the two squadrons present, it is not easy to speak. The Superior was pierced for sixty-four guns, had originally mounted sixty-two, and now mounted fifty-eight, the actual number of the Prince Regent. She was a little larger than the English ship; perhaps one hundred and fifty tons. Between the Princess Charlotte and Mohawk there was not much difference in force, though there was some in construction. The metal of the English ship is said to have been the heaviest. The Pike was a little heavier than

The next day it came on to blow, and the squadron was compelled to make an offing for safety. The gale lasted until the 15th, when the Lady of the Lake joined, to say that General Izard had reached the Harbour. The ships now went in, for the first time since the 2d of August, having kept the lake forty-five days; much of the time under canvass. On the 16th, the look-out vessel was sent to order in the different brigs. The Jefferson and Jones arrived on the 17th, having been in the late gale, which drove them

the Montreal, and the Madison than the Niagara. As to men, there could be no essential difference, though it was in the power of Sir James Yeo to get as many as he could desire from the army. It was known in the squadron, that Com. Chauncey intended to disregard altogether the gun-boats and schooners, did they choose to come out. It has not been in our power to ascertain the metal of the Prince Regent, her gun-deck battery having been represented equally as thirty-twos and as twenty-fours. If the former, the difference between the two squadrons was ideal, rather than substantial.

The history of no marine probably furnishes an instance of a higher state of discipline than Com. Chauncey had brought his squadron up to during this summer. Officers of experience and merit, who were in the fleet, still speak of it with pleasure, as an exception even in a service remarkable for this high quality. At exercising sails, and in working ship, the method, accuracy, and rapidity of the crews have been likened to the drill of favourite regiments of guards in Europe; and at the guns the men are described as having been literally terrible. They were kept constantly in practice with targets, handling heavy long guns like muskets, and pointing them like rifles. Discreet observers have even doubted whether the English could have got out, had they attempted it, as they must have advanced, bows on, through a channel less than a mile wide, for it is believed every spar would have been taken out of them before they could close. The exercise by which this high condition was produced had been of the severest kind. The men had commenced, by being kept at the guns an hour, in violent exertion, when it was found that they were exhausted. The time was gradually extended, however, until the Superior's people have been known to come out of an exercise of several hours continuance, as fresh and as gay as if they had been at sport.

to the head of the lake. The first had thrown overboard ten guns, and was only kept off the shore, by carrying sail, and by the aid of the under-tow. A tremendous sea running, the brig was twice on her beam ends.

The division of General Izard consisted of four thousand men, of whom three thousand embarked on the 19th, but, another gale intervening, did not sail until the 21st. This force was landed at the mouth of the Genesee on the 22nd. As soon as this duty was performed, Com. Chauncey went off Kingston again, where he appeared on the 28th. Two of the enemy's ships were coming out under a press of sail, most probably with troops to reinforce the army on the Niagara, but were driven back. The 29th, the wind being fair, the squadron looked into Kingston again, and the Lady was sent close in, when it was found that the large ship, which had been called the St. Lawrence, was completely rigged, but had no sails bent. As this vessel was pierced for one hundred and twelve guns, and was intended for metal in proportion, she was more than equal to meeting the whole American force. On the 5th of October, the Sylph looked in again, and found her sails bent and top-gallant yards crossed, when Com. Chauncey ran over to the Harbour, where he anchored on the 7th, and prepared to receive an attack.

For some days, Sir James Yeo was confidently expected; and Com. Chauncey moored his ships outside the point, under the fort, in readiness to receive him. With so little skill, however, had the works at this important post been planned, that there was no point where more than four guns at a time could be brought to bear on the enemy. This evil was in

part repaired, and a reinforcement of troops shortly after arriving, under Major-General Brown, all apprehensions ceased by the end of the month.

Sir James Yeo sailed in the St. Lawrence, with four other ships, two brigs, and a schooner, on the 15th of October, and he continued in command of the lake for the remainder of the season. He is said to have had more than eleven hundred men in his flag ship; and it was understood that the enemy had become so wary, that a captain was stationed on each deck. Other duty probably occupied him, for no attempt was made on the Harbour, nor did the enemy even blockade it; the necessities of the Niagara frontier calling his attention in that quarter.

On the 19th of November, Mr. M'Gowan, a midshipman, accompanied by Mr. William Johnson, a celebrated partisan, went with a torpedo to blow up the St. Lawrence, then supposed to be lying in Kingston. He was discovered by two of the enemy's boats, and found himself reduced to the necessity of capturing them. Having now as many prisoners as men of his own, and understanding that the ship was not in port, Mr. M'Gowan returned to the Harbour. At the end of the month the navigation closed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Contemplated invasion—Hostile preparations — Advance against Plattsburg—Plattsburg Bay—Comparative force of the belligerents—Approach of the English—Battle of Plattsburg Bay—Victory over the English—Incidents of the battle—Captain Downie—Consequences of the victory.

ALTHOUGH Lake Champlain had been the scene of so many important events, in the previous wars of the continent, the country had so far advanced as to render it, until near the close of 1814, of but little moment in the present contest. By that time, large reinforcements had arrived in the Canadas, from Europe, and an army was collected in the vicinity of Montreal, that has been differently estimated to contain from ten to fifteen thousand men. With this force, the enemy now contemplated an invasion of the northern and least populous counties of New York, following the route laid down for Gen. Burgoyne, in his unfortunate expedition of 1777. How far the English expected to penetrate, on this occasion, is still a matter of doubt, though Crown Point and Ticonderoga are thought to have been their aim, with a view to farther conquests in the

spring. Some have imagined that they hoped to reach Albany, a measure that would have induced a total loss of their whole force, as double the number of men named could hardly have attempted such an enterprise with a rational prospect of success. It was most probably intended to occupy a portion of the northern frontier, with the expectation of turning the circumstance to account in the pending negotiations, the English commissioners soon after advancing a claim to drive the Americans back from their ancient boundaries, with a view to leave Great Britain the entire possession of the lakes. In such an expedition, the command of Champlain became of great importance, as it flanked the march of the invading army for more than a hundred miles, and offered so many facilities for fowarding supplies, as well as for annoyance and defence. Until this season, neither nation had a force of any moment on that water, but the Americans had built a ship and a schooner during the winter and spring; and when it was found that the enemy was preparing for a serious effort, the keel of a brig was laid. Many galleys, or gun-boats, were also constructed.

On the other hand, the English were not idle. In addition to the small vessels they had possessed the previous year, they built a brig, and as soon as the last American vessel was in frame, they laid the keel of a ship. By constructing the latter, a great advantage was secured, care being taken, as a matter of course, to make her of a size sufficient to be certain of possessing the greatest force. The American brig, which was called the Eagle, was launched about the middle of August; and the English ship, which was named the Confiance, on

COMMODORE

THOMAS MACDONOUGH, U.S.N.

London, Published by R. Bentley, 1839

the 25th of the same month. As the English army was already collecting on the frontier, the utmost exertions were now made by both sides, and each appeared on the lake as it got ready. Capt. M'Donough, who still commanded the American force, was enabled to get out a few days before his adversary; and cruising being almost out of the question on this long and narrow body of water, he advanced as far as Plattsburg, the point selected for the defence, and anchored, the 3d of September, on the flank of the troops which occupied the entrenchments at that place.*

About this time, Sir George Prevost, the English commander-in-chief, advanced against Plattsburg, then held by Brig. Gen. Macomb, at the head of only 1500 effectives, with a force that probably amounted to 12,000 men. The English army was divided into four brigades, which were led by Lieut.-Gen. de Rottenburg, Majors-Gen. Brisbane, Power, and Robinson; Major-Gen. Baynes doing the duty of Adj.-General. With this formidable force, Sir George Prevost advanced slowly, waiting for the flotilla to get ready, and to appear on his left flank. A good deal of skirmishing ensued, and from the 7th to the 11th the enemy was employed in bringing up his battering train, stores, and reinforcements. Captain Downie, late of the Montreal, on Lake Ontario, had been sent by Sir James Yeo to command on this lake. It has been said that he was harried into action by the pressing solicitations of the Governor-General, but in the course of a news-

* Previously to this, the enemy made an abortive attempt to sink a vessel in the Otter, to prevent the Americans from getting out, but was beaten off.

paper controversy that succeeded, the latter caused a letter of the commanding naval officer to be published, in which Capt. Downie, but a few days before the conflict, announced his determination not to go out until his vessels were ready. In one sense, certainly, neither squadron was in a very prepared state, the largest English vessel having been in the water but sixteen days, when it was brought into action; and the second vessel in size of the Americans but thirty days. In point of fact, the Eagle was ready for service but eight days before the Confiance. As these vessels, however, had little need of stores, and the action that ensued was fought at anchor, they were, in truth, a species of floating batteries.

On the 6th, Captain M'Donough ordered the galleys to the head of the bay, to annoy the English army, and a cannonading occured which lasted two hours. The wind coming on to blow a gale that menaced the galleys with shipwreck, Mr. Duncan, a midshipman of the Saratoga, was sent in a gig to order them to retire. It is supposed that the appearance of the boat induced the enemy to think that Captain M'Donough himself had joined his galleys, for he concentrated a fire on the galley Mr. Duncan was in, and that young officer received a severe wound, by which he lost the use of an arm. Afterwards one of the galleys drifted in under the guns of the enemy, and she also sustained some loss, but was eventually brought off.

The general direction of Lake Champlain is north and south, but at the point called Cumberland Head, in coming south, the land bends north again, forming Plattsburg Bay, which is a deep indentation of the shore that leaves a basin open to the southward.

and which, in form, consequently lies nearly parallel to the main lake. The east side of this bay is protected by the long narrow bit of land that terminates in the Head. Its bottom, or northern end, and its western shore, are encircled by the main, while to the southward and eastward is the entrance. Near the centre of the western shore the Saranac empties into the bay, and on both its banks stands the village of Plattsburg. About half a league from the Head, in a south-westerly direction, and quite near the western shore, is an extensive shoal, and a small low island, which commands the approach to the bay in that direction. At this spot, which is called Crab Island, the naval hospital was established, and a small battery of one gun erected.

Captain M'Donough had chosen an anchorage a little to the south of the outlet of the Saranac for his position. His vessels lay in a line parallel to the coast, extending north and south, and distant from the western shore near two miles. The last vessel at the southward was so near the shoal, as to prevent the English from passing that end of the line, while all the ships lay so far out towards Cumberland Head, as to bring the enemy within reach of carronades, should he enter the bay on that side. The Eagle, Captain Henley, lay at the northern extremity of the American line, and what might, during the battle, have been called its head, the wind being at the northward and eastward; the Saratoga, Captain M'Donough's own vessel, second; the Ticonderoga, Lieut. Com. Cassin, third; and the Preble, Lieut. Charles Budd, last. The Preble lay a little farther south than the pitch of Cumberland Head. The first of these vessels just mentioned was a brig of twenty guns, and a hundred and fifty men, all told; the se-

cond a ship of twenty-six guns, and two hundred and twelve men; the third a schooner of seventeen guns and one hundred and ten men; the last a sloop, or cutter, of seven guns and thirty men. The metal of all these vessels, as well as of those of the enemy, was unusually heavy, there being no swell in the lake to render it dangerous. The Saratoga mounted eight long twenty-fours, six forty-two, and twelve thirty-two pound carronades; the Eagle eight long eighteens and twelve thirty-two pound carronades; the Ticonderoga four long eighteens, eight long twelves, and four thirty-two pound carronades, and one eighteen pound columbiad; the Preble seven long nines. In addition to these four vessels, the Americans had ten galleys, or gun-boats, six large and four small. Each of the former mounted a long twenty-four, and an eighteen pound columbiad; each of the latter one long twelve. The galleys, on an average, had about thirty-five men each. The total force of the Americans present consisted, consequently, of fourteen vessels, mounting eighty-six guns, and containing about eight hundred and fifty men, including officers, and a small detachment of soldiers, who did duty as marines, none of the corps having been sent on Lake Champlain. To complete his order of battle, Captain M'Donough directed two of the galleys to keep in-shore of the Eagle, and a little to the windward of her, to sustain the head of the line; one or two more to lie opposite to the interval between the Eagle and Saratoga; a few opposite to the interval between the Saratoga and Ticonderoga; and two or three opposite the interval between the Ticonderoga and Preble. If any order had been given to cover the rear of the line in the same manner, it was not obeyed.

The Americans were, consequently, formed in two lines, distant from each other about forty yards; the large vessels at anchor, and the galleys under their sweeps. Owing to the latter circumstance, the inner line soon got to be very irregular however, some of the galleys pressing boldly forward, while others were less impelled by the ardour of their commanders.

The known force of the enemy was materially greater than that of the Americans. His largest vessel, the Confiance, commanded by Capt. Downie in person, had the gun-deck of a heavy frigate, mounting on it an armament similar to that of the Constitution or United States, or thirty long twenty-fours. She had no spar-deck, but there was a spacious top-gallant forecastle, and short poop that came no farther forward than the mizzen-mast. On the first were a long twenty-four on a circle, and four heavy carronades, and on the last two heavy carronades, making an armament of thirty-seven guns in all.* Her complement of men is supposed to have been considerably more than three hundred. The next vessel of the enemy was the Linnet, Captain Pring, a brig of sixteen long twelves, with a crew of about one hundred men. There were two sloops, the Chubb, Lieutenant M'Ghee, and

* This statement is different from the published account of Captain M'Donough, who made the force of the Confiance thirty-nine guns, of calibres varying a little from those given here. There were thirty-nine guns on board the Confiance, but two of them were not mounted, or intended to be mounted. Captain M'Donough's report was probably made on the representation of some who had not properly examined the English ship. That given here is taken from an officer who was on board the Confiance within ten minutes after the Linnet struck, and who was in charge of her for two months.

the Finch, Lieutenant Hicks, the former carrying ten eighteen pound carronades and one long six, and the latter six eighteen pound carronades, one eighteen pound columbiad, and four long sixes. Each of these sloops had about forty men. To these four vessels was added a force in galleys or gun-boats, which Sir George Prevost, in his published accounts, states at twelve in number, and Captian M'Donough at thirteen. These vessels were similarly constructed to the American galleys, eight mounting two, and the remainder but one gun each. Thus the whole force of Captian Downie consisted of sixteen or seventeen vessels, as the case may have been, mounting, in all, ninety-five or ninety-six guns, and carrying about one thousand men.

On the 3rd of September, the British gun-boats sailed from Isle aux Noix to cover the left flank of their army, then marching on Plattsburg, under the orders of Captain Pring, and on the 4th that officer took possession of Isle au Motte, where he constructed a battery, and landed some supplies for the troops. On the 8th, the four larger vessels arrived under Captain Downie, but remained at anchor until the 11th, waiting to receive some necessaries. At daylight on the morning just mentioned, the whole force weighed, and moved forward in a body.

The guard-boat of the Americans pulled in shortly after the sun had risen, and announced the approach of the enemy. As the wind was fair, a good working breeze at the north-ward and eastward, Capt. M'Donough ordered the vessels cleared, and preparations made to fight at anchor. Eight bells were striking in the American squadron, as the upper sails of the English vessels were seen passing along the land, in the main lake, on their way to double

Cumberland Head, in order to enter the bay. The enemy had the wind rather on the larboard quarter, the booms of his cutters swinging out to starboard. The Finch led, succeeded by the Confiance, Linnet, and Chubb, while the gun-boats, all of which, as well as those of the Americans, had two latine sails, followed without much order, keeping just clear of the shore.

The first vessel that came round the Head was a sloop, which is said to have carried a company of amateurs, and which took no part in the engagement. She kept well to leeward, stood down towards Crab Island, and was soon unobserved.* The Finch came next, and soon after the other large vessels of the enemy opened from behind the land, and hauled up to the wind in a line abreast, lying-to until their galleys could join. The latter passed to leeward, and formed in the same manner as their consorts. The two squadrons were now in plain view of each other, distant about a league. As soon as their gun-boats were in their stations, and the different commanders had received their orders, the English filled, with their starboard tacks aboard, and headed in towards the American vessels, in a line abreast, the Chubb to windward, and the Finch to leeward, most of the gun-boats, however, being to leeward of the latter. The movements of the Finch had been a little singular ever since she led round the Head, for she is said not to have hove-to, but to have run off,

* As the character of this vessel was not at first known, it is not impossible that Captain M'Donough mistook her for one of the gun-boats, more especially as she is said to have subsequently fled with them, which would account for the fact of his stating the latter at one more than Sir George Prevost, who doubtless had an accurate knowledge of Captain Downie's force.

half way to Crab Island with the wind abeam, then to have tacked and got into her station, after the other vessels had filled. This movement was probably intended to reconnoitre, or to menace the rear of the Americans. The enemy was now standing in, close hauled, the Chubb looking well to windward of the Eagle, the vessel that lay at the head of the American line, the Linnet laying her course for the bows of the same brig, the Confiance intending to fetch far enough ahead of the Saratoga to lay that ship athwart hawse, and the Finch, with the gun-boats, standing for the Ticonderoga and Preble.

Captain M'Donough had taken his anchorage with the eye of a seaman. As he has been mentioned, his line could not be doubled on account of the shoal; there was not room to anchor on his broadside out of reach of the carronades, that formed so large a portion of his armaments, and in order to close, it was necessary, let the wind blow as it might, to stand in upon his vessels, bows on. Though the latter was an experiment not to be rashly attempted, the English, accustomed to see it succeed in their European conflicts, did not hesitate to adopt it on this occasion, most probably presuming on their knowledge of the large proportion of short guns in the vessels of their adversaries.

As a matter of course, the Americans were anchored with springs. But not content with this customary arrangement, Captain M'Donough had laid a kedge broad off on each bow of the Saratoga, and brought their hawsers in upon the two quarters, letting them hang in bights under water. This timely precaution gained the victory.

As the enemy filled, the American vessels sprang

their broadsides to bear, and a few minutes passed in the solemn and silent expectation that, in a disciplined ship, always precedes a battle. Suddenly the Eagle discharged, in quick succession, the four long eighteens in broadside. In clearing the decks of the Saratoga, some hen-coops were thrown overboard, and the poultry had been permitted to run at large. Startled by the reports of the guns, a young cock flew upon a gun slide, clapped his wings and crowed. At this animating sound, the men spontaneously gave three cheers. This little occurrence relieved the usual breathing time, between preparation and the combat, and it had a powerful influence on the known tendencies of the seamen. Still Captain M'Donough did not give the order to commence, although the enemy's galleys now opened, for it was apparent that the fire of the Eagle, which vessel continued to engage, was useless. As soon, however, as it was seen that her shot told, Captain M'Donough himself sighted a long twenty-four, and the gun was fired. This shot is said to have struck the Confiance near the outer hawse-hole, and to have passed the length of her deck, killing and wounding several men, and carrying away the wheel. It was a signal for all the American long guns to open, and it was soon seen that the English commanding ship, in particular, was suffering heavily. Still the enemy advanced steadily, and in the most gallant manner, confident, if he could get the desired position with his vessels, that the great weight of the Confiance would at once decide the fate of the day. But he had miscalculated his own powers of endurance, and not improbably those of annoyance possessed by the Americans. The anchors of the Confiance were hanging by the stoppers,

in readiness to let go, and the larboard bower was soon cut away, as well as a spare anchor in the larboard forechains. In short, after bearing the fire of the American vessels as long as possible, and the wind beginning to baffle, Captain Downie found himself reduced to the necessity of anchoring while still at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the American line. The helm was put a-port, the ship got into the wind, and a kedge was let go, while the vessel took a sheer, and brought up with her starboard bower. In doing the latter, however, the kedge was fouled and became of no use. In coming to, her halyards were let run, and she hauled up her courses. At this time the Linnet and Chubb were still standing in, farther to windward, and the former, as her guns bore, fired a broadside at the Saratoga. The Linnet soon after anchored, somewhat nearer than the Confiance, getting a very favourable position forward of the Eagle's beam. The Chubb kept under way, intending, if possible, to rake the American line. The Finch got abreast of the Ticonderoga, under her sweeps, supported by the gun-boats.

The English vessels came-to in very handsome style, nor did the Confiance fire a single gun until secured, although the entire American line was now engaged with all its force. As soon as Captain Downie had performed this duty in a seaman-like manner, his ship appeared a sheet of fire, discharging all her guns at nearly the same instant, pointed principally at the Saratoga. The effect of a broadside, thrown from sixteen long twenty-fours, double shotted, in perfectly smooth water, with guns levelled to point blank range, and coolly sighted, was terrible in the little ship that received it. After the crash had

subsided, Captain M'Donough saw that near half his crew was on the deck, for many had been knocked down who sustained no real injuries. It is supposed, however, that about forty men, or near one-fifth of her complement, were killed and wounded on board the Saratoga by this single discharge. The hatches had been fastened down, as usual, but the bodies so cumbered the deck, that it was found necessary to remove the fastenings, and to pass them below. The effect continued but a moment, when the ship resumed her fire as gallantly as ever. Among the slain, however, was Mr. Peter Gamble, the first lieutenant.* By this early loss, but one officer of that rank, Acting-Lieutenant Vallette, was left in the Saratoga.

On the part of the principal vessels, the battle now became a steady, animated, but, as guns were injured, a gradually decreasing cannonade. Still the character of the battle was relieved by several incidents that merit notice. The Chubb, while manœuvring near the head of the American line, received a broadside from the Eagle that crippled her, and she drifted down between the opposing vessels, until near the Saratoga, which ship fired a shot into her, and she immediately struck. Mr. Platt, one of the Saratoga's midshipmen, was sent with a boat to take possession. This young officer threw the prize a line, and towed her down astern of the Saratoga, and in-shore, anchor-

* This young officer was on his knees sighting the bow gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, drove a portion of it against his breast, and laid him dead on the deck without breaking his skin. Fifteen minutes later, one of the American shot struck a muzzle of a twenty-four on board the Confiance, dismounted it, sending it bodily in-board against the groin of Captain Downie, killing him also, without breaking the skin.

ing her near the mouth of the Saranac. This little success occurred within a quarter of an hour after the enemy had anchored, and was considered a favourable omen, though all well knew that on the Confiance alone depended the fate of the day. The Chubb had suffered materially, nearly half of her people having been killed and wounded.

About an hour later, the Finch was also driven out of her berth by the Ticonderoga, and, being crippled, she drifted down upon Crab Island Shoal, where, receiving a shot or two from the gun mounted in the battery, she struck, and was taken possession of by the invalids belonging to the hospital. At this end of the line, the British galleys early made several desperate efforts to close, and soon after the Finch had drifted away, they forced the Preble out of the American line, this vessel cutting her cable, and shifting her anchorage to a station considerably in-shore, where she was of no more service throughout the day. The rear of the American line was certainly its weakest point; and having compelled the little Preble to retreat, the enemy's galleys were emboldened to renew their efforts against the vessel ahead of her, which was the Ticonderoga. This schooner, however, was better able to resist them, and she was very nobly fought. Her spirited commander, Lieutenant Com. Cassin, walked the taffrail, where he could watch the movements of the enemy's galleys, amidst showers of canister and grape, directing discharges of bags of musket balls, and other light missiles, that had the effect of keeping the British effectually at bay. Several times the English galleys, of which many were very gallantly fought, closed quite near, with an evident intent to board, but the great

steadiness on board the Ticonderoga beat them back, and completely covered the rear of the line for the remainder of the day. So desperate were some of the assaults, notwithstanding, that the galleys have been described as several times getting nearly within a boat hook's length of the schooner.

While these reverses and successes were occurring in the rear of the two lines, the Americans were suffering heavily at the other extremity. The Linnet had got a very commanding position, and she was very admirably fought; while the Eagle, which received all her fire, and part of that of the Confiance, having lost her springs, found herself so situated as not to be able to bring her guns fairly to bear on either of the enemy's vessels. Captain Henley had run his topsail-yards, with the sails stopped, to the mast heads, previously to engaging, and he now cut his cable, sheeted home his topsails, cast the brig, and running down, anchored by the stern, between the Saratoga and Ticonderoga, necessarily a little in-shore of both. Here he opened afresh, and with better effect, on the Confiance and galleys, using his larboard guns. But this movement left the Saratoga exposed to nearly the whole fire of the Linnet, which brig now sprang her broadside in a manner to rake the American ship on her bows.

Shortly after this important change had occurred at the head of the lines, the fire of the two ships began materially to lessen, as gun after gun became disabled; the Saratoga, in particular, having had all her long pieces rendered useless by shot, while most of the carronades were dismounted, either in the same manner or in consequence of a disposition in

the men to overcharge them.* At length but a single carronade remained in the starboard batteries, and on firing it, the naval bolt broke, the gun flew off the carriage, and it actually fell down the main hatch. By this accident, the American commanding ship was left in the middle of the battle, without a single available gun. Nothing remained but to make an immediate attempt to wind the ship.

A stream anchor was suspended astern, and it was let go accordingly. The men then clapped on the hawser that led to the starboard quarter, and brought the ship's stern up over the kedge, but here she hung, there not being sufficient wind, or current, to force her bows round. A line had been bent to a bight in the stream cable, with a view to help wind the ship, and she now rode by the kedge and this line, with her stern under the raking broadside of the Linnet, which brig kept up a steady and well-directed fire. The larboard batteries having been manned and got ready, Captain M'Donough ordered all the men from the guns, where they were uselessly suffering, telling them to go forward. By rowsing on the line, the ship was at length got so far round, that the aftermost gun would bear on the Confiance, when it was instantly manned, and began to play. The next gun was used in the same manner, but it was soon apparent that the ship could be got no farther round, for she was now nearly on to the wind. At this critical moment, Mr. Brum, the master, bethought him of the hawser that had led

* The want of officers was greatly felt in this particular. In some instances the seamen would put two round shot, and two stand of grape, into a carronade, the end of the last stand sticking out of the muzzle. In consequence of this mistaken zeal, much less execution was done, besides crippling the heated guns, the enemy's sides being found full of shot that had lodged.

to the larboard quarter. It was got forward under the bows, and passed aft to the starboard quarter, when the ship's stern was immediately sprung to the westward, so as to bring all her larboard guns to bear on the English ship with fatal effect.

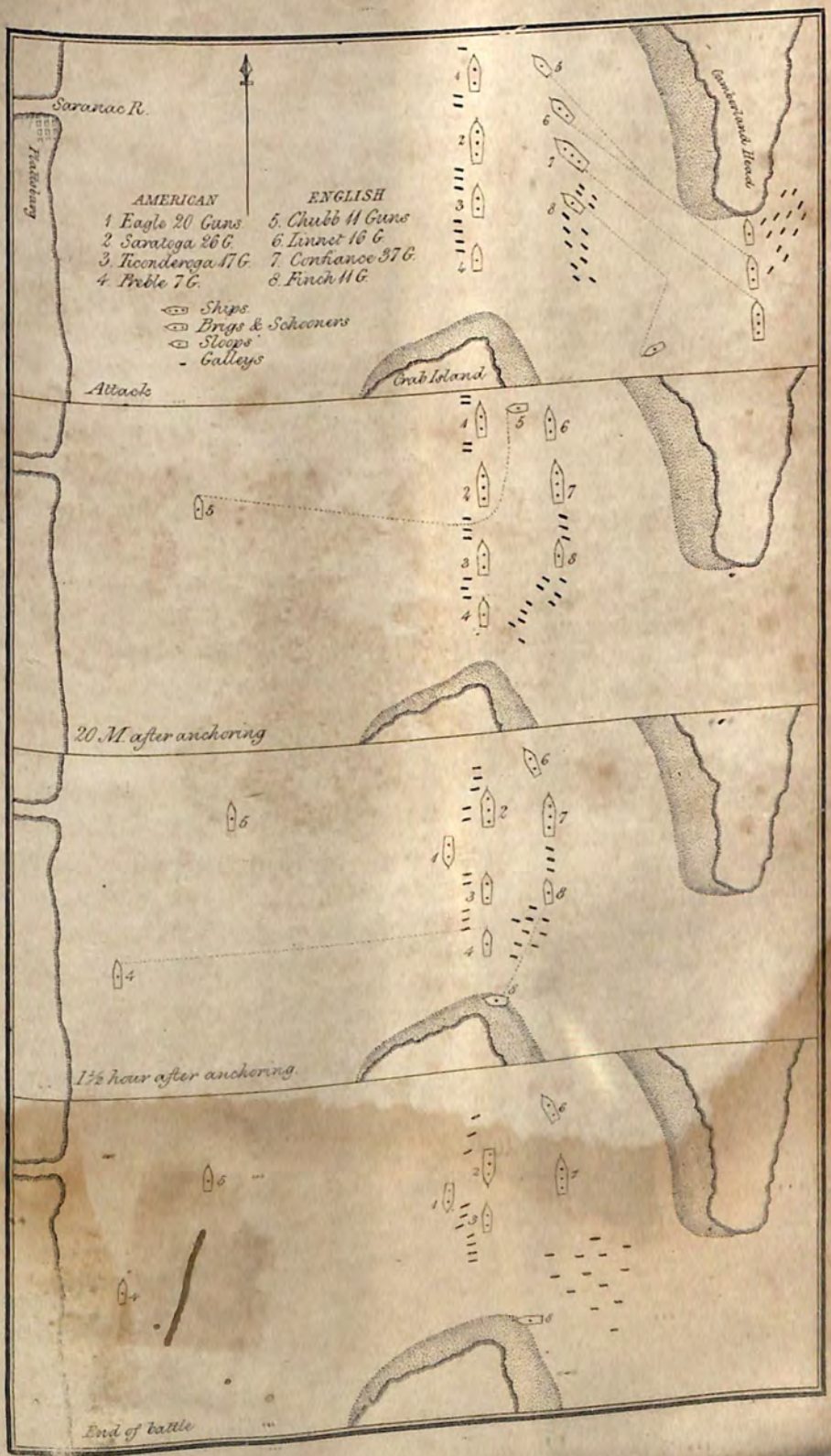
As soon as the preparations were made to wind the Saratoga, the Confiance attempted to perform the same evolution. Her springs were hauled on, but they merely forced the ship ahead, and having borne the fresh broadside of the Americans, until she had scarcely a gun with which to return the fire, and failing in all her efforts to get round, about two hours and a quarter after the commencement of the action her commanding officer lowered his flag. By hauling again upon the starboard hawser, the Saratoga's broadside was immediately sprung to bear on the Linnet, which brig struck in about fifteen minutes after her consort. At this moment the enemy's galleys had been driven back nearly or quite a mile, and they lay irregularly scattered, and setting to leeward, keeping up a desultory firing. As soon as they found that the large vessels had submitted, they ceased the combat, and lowered their colours. At this proud moment, it is believed, on authority entitled to the highest respect, there was not a single English ensign, out of sixteen or seventeen that had so lately been flying, left abroad in the bay!

In this long and bloody conflict, the Saratoga had twenty-eight men killed, and twenty-nine wounded, or more than a fourth of all on board her; the Eagle thirteen killed, and twenty wounded, which was sustaining a loss in nearly an equal proportion; the Ticonderoga six killed, and six wounded; the Preble two killed; while on board the ten galleys, only

three were killed, and three wounded. The Saratoga was hulled fifty-five times, principally by twenty-four-pound shot; and the Eagle thirty-nine times. After the first broadside of the Confiance, the fire of that ship became much less destructive, the shot passing higher at each successive discharge. Nearly all the hammocks were cut to pieces in the Saratoga's netting, at the second broadside; and it was seen, as the battle advanced, that the shot cut the standing rigging farther from the deck. Few persons were hurt by anything but grape, or by the shot of the Linnet,* after the first fire.

According to the report of Captain Pring, of the Linnet, dated on the 12th of September, the Confiance lost forty-one killed, and forty wounded. It was admitted, however, that no good opportunity had then existed to ascertain the casualties. At a later day, the English themselves enumerated her wounded at eighty-three. This would make the total loss of that ship one hundred and twenty-four; but even this number is supposed to be materially short of the truth. The Linnet is reported to have had ten killed, and fourteen wounded. This loss is also believed to be considerably below the fact. The Chubb

* On inquiring into a circumstance so curious, when the ships lay at the same distance and in smooth water, the American officers came to the conclusion that the enemy had levelled his guns to point blank range previously to engaging, and that as the quoins were loosened at each discharge, they were not properly replaced. There is no question that the fire of the Americans produced a great impression on board the Confiance, and that, while making the abortive attempt to wind, the ship was in great confusion. After the battle, the charges of her guns were drawn, and on the side she had fought one gun was found with a canvass bag holding two round shot, rammed home and wadded, without any powder; another with two cartridges and no shot or wad; a third with a wad below the cartridge.



BATTLE OF PLATTSBURG BAY.

The distances are not to be considered as strictly accurate the intention being to give an idea of the relative positions of the vessels

London Published by R. Bentley, New Burlington Street

had six killed, and ten wounded. The Finch was reported by the enemy to have had but two men wounded. No American official report of the casualties in the English vessels has been published, but, by an estimate made on the best data that could be found, the Linnet was thought to have lost fifty men, and the two smaller vessels taken, about thirty between them. No account, whatever, has been published of the casualties on board the English galleys, though the slaughter in them is believed to have been very heavy. An impression has prevailed with the public, that these galleys did not support their commander, but in the American fleet they were thought to have been conducted with great gallantry, and to have fully sustained their share of the battle. They are also believed to have suffered in a just proportion, from the fire of the Ticonderoga in particular.

As soon as the Linnet struck, a lieutenant was sent to take possession of the Confiance. Bad as was the situation of the Saratoga, that of this prize was much worse. She had been hulled one hundred and five times; had probably near, if not quite, half her people killed and wounded; and this formidable floating battery was reduced to helpless impotency. She had not been surrendered a moment too soon.

As the boarding officer was passing along the deck of the prize, he accidentally ran against a lock-string, and fired one of the Confiance's starboard guns, which sent its shot in the direction of Cumberland Head. Up to this moment, the English galleys had been slowly drifting to leeward, with their colours down, apparently waiting to be taken possession of, but at the discharge of this gun, which may have been

understood as a signal, one or two of them began to move slowly off, and soon after the others followed, pulling but a very few sweeps. It is not known that one of them hoisted her ensign. Captain M'Donough made a signal for the American galleys to follow, but it was discovered that their men were wanted at the pumps of some of the larger vessels, to keep them from sinking, the water being found over the berth-deck of the Linnet, and the signal was revoked. As there was not a mast that would bear any canvass among all the larger vessels, the English galleys escaped, though they went off at first slowly and irregularly, as if distrusting their own liberty.

Captain M'Donough applauded the conduct of all the officers of the Saratoga. Mr. Gamble died at his post, fighting bravely; Mr. Vallette, the only lieutenant left, conducted with the cool discretion that marks the character of this highly respectable and firm officer;* and Mr. Brum, the master, who was entrusted with the important duty of winding the ship, never lost his self-possession for an instant. Captain Henley praised the conduct of his officers, as did Lieutenant Com. Cassin. The galleys behaved very unequally, but the Borer, Mr. Conover;† Netley, Mr. Breese;‡ one under the orders of Mr. Robins, a master, and one or two more, were considered to have been very gallantly handled.

There was a common feeling of admiration at the manner in which the Ticonderoga, Lieutenant Com. Cassin, defended the rear of the line, and at the noble conduct of all on board her. Once or twice

* Now Commander Valette. † Now Commander Conover.
‡ Now Commander Breese.

the nearest vessels thought that schooner in flames, in consequence of the awful rapidity of her fire.

The Saratoga was twice on fire by hot shot thrown from the Confiance, her spanker having been nearly consumed. This fact has been denied, or the shot attributed to the batteries on the shore; but never by any respectable authority. No battery from the American shore, with the exception of the gun or two fired at the Finch from Crab Island, took any part in the naval encounter; nor could any, without endangering the American vessels equally with the enemy. Indeed the distance rendered it questionable whether shot could have reached with effect, as Captain M'Donough had anchored far off the land, in order to compel the enemy to come within range of his short guns.

The Americans found a furnace on board the Confiance, with eight or ten heated shot in it, though the fact is not stated with any view to attribute it to the enemy as a fault. It was an advantage that he possessed, most probably, in consequence of the presence of a party of artillerists.

Captain M'Donough, who was already very favourably known to the service for his personal intrepidity, obtained a vast accession of reputation by the results of this day. His dispositions for receiving the attack were highly judicious and seaman-like. By the manner in which he anchored his vessels, with the shoal so near the rear of his line as to cover that extremity, and the land of Cumberland Head so near his broadside as necessarily to bring the enemy within reach of his short guns, he completely made all his force available. The English were not near enough, perhaps, to give to carronades their full effect, but

this disadvantage was unavoidable, the assailing party having, of course, a choice in the distance. All that could be obtained, under the circumstances, appears to have been secured, and the result proved the wisdom of the actual arrangement. The personal deportment of Captain M'Donough in this engagement, like that of Captain Perry in the battle of Lake Erie, was the subject of general admiration in his little squadron. His coolness was undisturbed throughout all the trying scenes on board his own ship, and although lying against a vessel of double the force, and nearly double the tonnage of the Saratoga, he met and resisted her attack with a constancy that seemed to set defeat at defiance. The winding of the Saratoga, under such circumstances, exposed as she was to the raking broadsides of the Confiance and Linnet, especially the latter, was a bold, seaman-like and masterly measure, that required unusual decision and fortitude to imagine and execute. Most men would have believed that, without a single gun on the side engaged, a fourth of their people cut down, and their ship a wreck, enough of injury had been received to justify submission; but Captain M'Donough found the means to secure a victory in the desperate condition of the Saratoga.

Although the personal conduct of Captain Downie, and the gallantry of his attack, were beyond censure, the prudence and nautical merits of his mode of approach have been very justly questioned. The Confiance had been built in a time so short, and by exertions so great, as to put it out of the power of the Americans to construct a vessel to meet her in sufficient season to obviate the expected consequences, and it would be accusing the enemy of total imbecility to suppose, that after the known results of so

many combats, he had not made his vessel of ample force to ensure the victory. Few professional judges will deny, that a ship with the gun-deck dimensions, metal, and battery of a forty-four, ought to have been fully equal, at least, to contending with two such vessels as the Saragota and Eagle, which would at once be attributing to the enemy a superiority of force. The plan of the campaign that was destroyed by this defeat, the high objects in view, the fact that the English were the assailants, and that they could not but know the force they were to attack, together with all the other attendant circumstances, are so many assurances that the battle of Plattsburg Bay was fought, on the part of the enemy, with a confidence of victory that was only justified by this known advantage. The very name given to their largest ship was a pledge to this effect. Sir James Yeo, whose command extended to this lake, complained to his superior officer that Captain Downie had been hurried into action by the Governor-General unprepared, but he did not complain of an insufficiency of force, which would infer a grave fault in all connected with the previous arrangements. That Captain Downie went into action before his own crew and vessel had been long subject to drill and preparation, is true; and Captain M'Donough was labouring equally under the same disadvantage. These are incidents peculiar to sudden enterprises, and must be met by the resources of seamen. The Constitution took the Guerriere with a crew that had been acting together but little more than a month, and she was manœuvring before the squadron off New York, a much more delicate exploit, within five days of the time that a large proportion of her people had joined her! Captain Downie's

professional character, as well as his declarations, as they have been published to the world, are sufficient guarantees that he deemed the Confiance ready to meet the enemy. Sir James Yeo, with greater reason, complained that this officer had stood into the bay to make his attack, a step that brought him under a raking fire, and which, no doubt, materially contributed to the loss of the day. In short, Captain Downie made an attempt to lead into the hostile squadron bows on, a measure that the English often practised in Europe with comparative impunity, but which was an experiment imminently hazardous to make under the guns of an American man-of-war. Still his bearing was highly gallant; the weatherly position he obtained was much in his favour; and judging from the force of his own vessel, could he have got the berth he aimed at, there is great reason to think he would have succeeded. That he was foiled, must be attributed to the immovable steadiness, cool deliberation, and admirable fire of the assailed.

Although many of the American officers were wounded, but two that belonged to the quarter-deck were killed. These were Mr. Gamble, the first lieutenant of the Saratoga, and Mr. Stansbury, the first lieutenant of the Ticonderoga. * Mr.

* The manner in which Mr. Gamble met his death has been mentioned. Mr. Stansbury suddenly disappeared from the bulwarks forward, while superintending some duty with the springs. Two days after the action, his body rose to the surface of the water, near the vessel to which he had belonged, and it was found that it had been cut in two by a round shot. Both these gentlemen showed great coolness and spirit until they fell. Many officers were knocked down in the engagement, without having blood drawn. At one moment, there was a cry in the Saratoga that Captain M'Donough, or, as he was usually called, the commodore, was killed.

Smith,* a very valuable officer, and the first lieutenant of the Eagle, received a severe wound, but returned to his quarters during the action. On the part of the enemy, besides Captain Downie, several officers were killed, and three or four were wounded.

Captain M'Donough, besides the usual medal from Congress, and various compliments and gifts from different states and towns, was promoted for his services. The legislature of New York presented him with a small estate on Cumberland Head, which overlooked the scene of his triumph. The officers and crews met with the customary acknowledgments, and the country generally placed the victory by the side of that of Lake Erie. In the navy, which is better

He was lying on his face, on the quarter-deck, nearly if not quite senseless, and it was two or three minutes before he came to his recollection. He pointed a favourite gun most of the action, and while standing in the middle of the deck bending his body to sight it, a shot had cut in two the spanker boom, letting the spar fall on his back, a blow that might easily have proved fatal. A few minutes after this accident, the cry that the commodore was killed was heard again. This time, Captain M'Donough was lying on the left side of the deck, between two of the guns, covered with blood, and again nearly senseless. A shot had driven the head of the captain of his favourite gun in upon him, and knocked him into the scuppers. Mr. Brum, the master, a venerable old seaman, while winding the ship, had a large splinter driven so near his body, as actually to strip off his clothes. For a minute he was thought to be dead, but, on gaining his feet, he made an apron with his pocket handkerchief, and coolly went to work again with the springs! A few months later this veteran died, as is thought, of the injury. Mr. Vallette had a shot-box, on which he was standing, knocked from under his feet, and he too was once knocked down by the head of a seaman. He also received a severe splinter wound, though not reported. In short, very few escaped altogether, and in this desperate fight it appears to have been agreed on both sides to call no man wounded who could keep out of the hospital. Many who were not included among the wounded, feel the effects of their hurts to this day.

* Now Captain Smith, of the Ohio 80.

qualified to enter into just estimates of force, and all the other circumstances that enhance the merits of nautical exploits, the battle of Plattsburg Bay is justly placed among the very highest of its claims to glory.

The consequences of this victory were immediate and important. During the action Sir George Prevost had skirmished in front of the American works, and was busy in making demonstrations for a more serious attack. As soon, however, as the fate of the British squadron was ascertained, he made a precipitate and unmilitary retreat, abandoning much of his heavy artillery, stores, and supplies, and, from that moment to the end of the war, the northern frontier was cleared of the enemy.

CHAPTER XXX.

Successful attacks by the English—Construction of new vessels for the Lakes—Success of the Americans on the Lakes—Commodore Chauncey.

After the success of Captain Perry on Lake Erie, the English made no serious effort to recover the ascendency on the upper waters. During the winter of 1813–14, they are believed to have contemplated an attempt against a portion of the American vessels which were lying in Put-in Bay, but the enterprise was never effected. When Com. Sinclair hoisted his pennant as commander on this station, an expedition sailed against Michilimackinac, which was repulsed. He made some captures of vessels belonging to the North West Company, blew up a blockhouse in the Nautauwassauga, and compelled the enemy to destroy a schooner, called the Nancy, commanded by Lieutenant Worsley.

While these movements were in the course of occurrence in Lakes Superior and Huron, several of the small vessels were kept at the foot of Lake Erie, to

co-operate with the army then besieged at the fort of the same name. On the night of the 12th of August, the Somers, Ohio, and Porcupine, all of which were under Lieutenant Conkling, were anchored just at the outlet of the lake, to cover the left flank of the American works. The enemy brought up a party of seamen from below, with a view to cut them off, and about midnight he made an attack, under Captain Dobbs, in six or eight boats, most of which were large batteaux. The Ohio and Somers were surprised, the last being captured without any resistance, but the Porcupine, taking the alarm, easily effected her escape. The enemy drifted down the rapids with their two prizes, and secured them below.

In this sudden and handsome affair, the Americans had one man killed and ten wounded. The enemy lost about the same number by the resistance on board the Ohio, among whom was Lieutenant Radcliffe, of the Netley, slain. The Porcupine had no part in the action. This surprise was the result of excess of confidence, it being thought that the enemy had no force on Lake Erie with which to make such an attack. The manner in which they brought up the men and boats from Lake Ontario for this purpose, and the neatness with which the enterprise was executed, reflected great credit on all concerned.

Nor was this the only successful attempt of the same nature, made by the English on the upper lakes, during this season. Lieutenant Worsley, the officer who commanded the schooner destroyed by Com. Sinclair, had escaped with all his men, and obtaining a party of soldiers from Michilimackinac, and a strong body of Indians, he planned a surprise upon the Tigress and Scorpion, two schooners that

had been left in Lake Huron after the repulse on the post just mentioned. The Tigress mounted a twenty-four, had a crew of twenty-eight men, officers included, and was commanded by Mr. Champlin. She was lying at St. Joseph's, on the night of the 3rd of September, when Mr. Worsley made his attack in five large boats, one of which mounted a six, and another a three pounder, accompanied by nineteen canoes, containing more than two hundred men. The night was so dark that the enemy got very near before they were discovered, but Mr. Champlin* and his officers made a very gallant resistance. The schooner was not captured until all her officers had been shot down. The guns of the enemy were transferred to the Tigress, and, while she continued in her berth, the evening of the next day, the Scorpion, Lieutenant Turner, which had been cruising, came in and anchored about five miles from her. Neither vessel had signals, and there was no attempt to communicate that night. The next morning, at daylight, the Tigress was seen standing down towards the Scorpion, with American colours flying, and there not being the slightest apparent motive to suspect her change of character, she was permitted to come close alongside, when she fired all her guns, ran the Scorpion aboard, and carried her without difficulty. This surprise was wholly attributed to the want of signals, and Mr. Turner was honourably acquitted for the loss of his vessels. In carrying the Tigress, the enemy had a lieutenant and two men killed, and seven men wounded. On board the Tigress three men were killed, and all the officers and three seamen were

* Now Commander Champlin.

wounded. The Scorpion, being surprised, made no resistance.

These little captures, which were very creditable to the enterprise of the enemy, terminated the war on the upper lakes, the vessels being shortly after laid up. During the winter of 1814-15 both belligerents were building, the enemy having laid down a second two-decker at Kingston, while the Americans prepared to build two at the Harbour. To effect this purpose in time, Com. Chauncey sent in a statement to the department, by which it appears the service would require six hundred ship-carpenters, sixty ship-joiners, one hundred and twenty sawyers, seventy-five blacksmiths, twenty-five block and pump-makers, ten boat-builders, ten spar-makers, eighteen gun-carriage-makers, sixteen sail-makers, ten armorers, and five tin-men, or nine hundred and forty-nine artisans in all. With this force, Mr. Eckford engaged to put into the water two ships, to carry one hundred and two guns each, within sixty days from the time he commenced, the timber then standing in the forest. The order was given, and the work commenced in January. The news that a treaty of peace had been signed was received when one of these vessels, called the New Orleans, had been commenced but twenty-nine days. She was then nearly planked in, and it was calculated would have been in the water in twenty-seven days more. The second vessel was but little behind her, and there is no doubt that Com. Chauncey would have taken the lake, as soon as the navigation opened, with a force consisting of two sail of the line, two frigates, two corvettes, four brigs, and as many small craft as the service could possibly have required. As the enemy had received the frames of one or two

frigates from England, and had already begun to set them up, it is probable that a frigate would have been added to this force, by building her of the timber found too small for the heavier ships.*

The peace put a stop to the strife in ship-building,

* Henry Eckford, the justly celebrated builder by whom all these prodigies in constructing were performed, was a native of Scotland. Having adopted his art for a profession, he came to the Canadas while still a lad, and passed some time at Montreal, occupied in learning his trade. In 1791, when only nineteen years of age, he determined to establish himself in the United States, and crossing from Kingston, he landed on the very point, at the mouth of the Oswego, where seventeen years later he set up the frame of the Oneida 16, the first American vessel of war that was ever launched upon the lakes. Proceeding to New York, he got into business, and soon was known as one of the best and most enterprising ship-builders of that port. About the year 1807 he began to be employed by government, and during the whole war he was at the head of the building-yards on Lake Ontario, where, considering the difficulties with which he had to contend, he gained great distinction by his inexhaustible resources, self-reliance, energy, zeal, and the liberal and enlarged views he took of his duties. After the war Mr. Eckford resumed his calling in New York, building many fine frigates for the South American States. He also built the Ohio 80 for government, a ship that it is said gives more satisfaction than any two-decked vessel in the navy that has yet been tried.

About the year 1829, Mr. Eckford was induced to go to Constantinople, to build some ships for the Sultan. While making his arrangements to put the Turkish fleet on a respectable footing, so far as ships were concerned, this enterprising and far-sighted builder died of a fever.

Henry Eckford was undoubtedly a man of genius. He had not been thoroughly educated in the higher branches of his art, but he raised himself to a level of those who were, by the force of his own talents. His notions of the powers of ships were just, practical, and entirely free from prejudices, and his eye was as true as his judgment. As a man he was greatly respected, and as a citizen he showed a noble confidence in the government, by casting his whole fortune on that of the state, at a moment when others, with louder professions of attachment, were distrustful, backward, and untrue. He married early in New York, and left decendants in the third generation behind him when he went abroad on his eastern enterprise, intending to return to a home that had become endeared by the associations of forty years, at its termination.

and terminated the war on the lakes. In this inland contest, while the enemy had been active, bold, and full of resources, all impartial judges will award the palm to the Americans. On the upper lakes and on Champlain, the English had sought general actions, and decisive victories placed the republic in nearly undisputed command of all those waters. The important results that had been expected fully rewarded this success. On Lake Ontario, the English pursued a different policy, cautiously avoiding any conflict that might prove final, unless under circumstances that would ensure victory.

On Lake Champlain the enemy captured, in the course of the war, the Eagle and Growler, by means of their army. These two vessels were subsequently retaken, under the names of the Chubb and the Finch, and the whole English force was defeated. On Lake Erie, the success of the enemy was limited to the surprise of the four schooners mentioned in this chapter; while they lost, equally by surprise, the Detroit and Caledonia, their whole squadron in action, and a schooner on Lake Huron blown up. On Lake Ontario, the success of the enemy was limited to the capture of the Julia and Growler, in the affair of the 10th of August, and the re-capture of the latter vessel at Oswego. On no other occasion, with the exception of the gig of Mr. Gregory, and one boat carrying a gun and two cables, did any man, or thing, belonging to the navy fall into his hands. He made one exceedingly impotent attack on the Harbour, (previously to the arrival of Com. Yeo,) was beaten in a subsequent attempt on the same place, succeeded in taking Oswego, and committed some ravages at Sodus, and at the mouth of the Genesee. For a few

days he also co-operated occasionally with his army. On the part of the Americans, a spirited attack was made on Kingston in 1812; York was twice captured in 1813, as was also Fort George; a brig was brought off from York, and a vessel of twenty guns burned at the same place; another of fourteen guns at Presque Isle; a third driven ashore and blown up to the westward of Niagara; six gun-vessels and three gun-boats, and many smaller craft, were captured; and, at different times, two captains, many other officers, and several hundred seamen and marines, were taken. Kingston was often and closely blockaded, and, with short and few exceptions, the Americans had the command of the lake. The greater age of the English than the American frontier, as a settled country, gave the enemy material advantages, of which he fully availed himself. Owing to the vast resources of the English marine, which throughout the year 1814 had no other employment than this war, Sir James Yeo was enabled to render essential service to the British army, beyond a question, though the ascendency was lost during several of the most important months of the season. It ought never to be forgotten, moreover, that the wealthier portion of the American people, who, as a body, have seldom been true to the nation, in conflicts of opinion with Great Britain, allowed their confidence in the public securities to be so much impaired, that all the heaviest operations of Com. Chauncey were carried on by means of a depreciated currency; the securities that reason and truth should have taught capitalists were the very best that the world afforded, having been suffered to fall into a discredit that greatly impaired the efforts of all the public servants.

No officer of the American navy ever filled a station of the responsibility and importance of that which Com. Chauncey occupied; and it may be justly questioned if any officer could have acquitted himself better of the high trust that had been reposed in him. He commanded the profound respect of the vigilant, bold, and skilful commander to whom he was opposed, and to the last retained the entire confidence of his own government.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Cruise of the Constitution—The Constitution and Cyane—The Constitution and Levant—Captain Stewart—The Constitution chased—Good fortune of the Constitution.

When Com. Bainbridge gave up the command of the Constitution 44, in 1813, that ship was found to be so decayed as to require extensive repairs. Her crew was principally sent upon the lakes, a new one entered, and the command of her was given to Capt. Charles Stewart. The ship, however, was not able to get to sea until the winter of 1814, when she made a cruise to the southward, passing down the coast, and running through the West Indies, on her way home, when she fell in with La Pique 36, which ship made her escape by going through the Mona passage in the night. Previously to her return, the Constitution captured the Pictou 14, a man-of-war schooner of the enemy. Reaching the American coast, she was chased into Marblehead by two English frigates, the Juno and Tenedos. Shortly after she went to Boston. In this cruise the Constitution made a few prizes, in addition to the schooner.

On the 17th of December, the Constitution again left Boston, and ran off Bermuda, thence to the vicinity of Madeira, and into the Bay of Biscay. After this, she cruised some time in sight of the Rock of Lisbon, making two prizes, one of which was destroyed, and the other sent in. While in the vicinity of Lisbon, she made a large ship and gave chase, but, before her courses were raised, one of the prizes just mentioned was fallen in with, and while securing it, the strange sail disappeared. This vessel is understood to have been the Elizabeth 74, which, on her arrival at Lisbon, hearing that the Constitution was off the coast, immediately came out in quest of her; but Capt. Stewart had stood to the southward and westward, in quest of an enemy said to be in that direction.

On the morning of the 20th of February, the wind blowing a light Levanter, from one of those impulses which cannot be explained, finding nothing where he was, Capt. Stewart ordered the helm put up, and the ship ran off south-west, varying her position, in that direction, fifty or sixty miles. At one P. M. a strange sail was seen on the larboard bow, when the ship hauled up two or three points, and made sail in chase. In about twenty minutes the stranger was made out to be a ship, and half an hour later a second vessel was seen farther to leeward, which at two was also ascertained to be a ship. The Constitution kept standing on, all three vessels on bowlines, until four, when the nearest of the strangers made a signal to the ship to leeward, and shortly after he kept away and ran down towards his consort, then about three leagues under his lee. The Constitution immediately squared away, and set her

studding sails, alow and aloft. No doubt was now entertained of the strangers being enemies; the nearest ship having the appearance of a small frigate, and the vessel to leeward of a large sloop of war. The first was carrying studding sails on both sides, while the last was running off under short canvass, to allow her consort to close. Capt. Stewart believed it was their intention to keep away, on their best mode of sailing, until night, in the hope of escaping; and he crowded every thing that would draw, with a view to get the nearest vessel under his guns. About half past four, the spar proving defective, the main royal mast was carried away, and the chase gained. A few guns were now fired, but finding that the shot fell short, the attempt to cripple the stranger was abandoned.

Perceiving, at half-past five, that it was impossible to prevent the enemy from effecting a junction, the Constitution, then a little more than a league distant from the farthest ship, cleared for action. Ten minutes later, the two chases passed within hail of each other, came by the wind with their heads to the northward, hauled up their courses, and were evidently clearing to engage. In a few minutes, both ships suddenly made sail, close by the wind, in order to weather upon the American frigate; but perceiving that the latter was closing too fast, they again hauled up their courses, and formed on the wind, the smallest ship ahead.

At six P. M. the Constitution had the enemy completely under her guns, and she showed her ensign. The strangers answered this defiance by setting English colours, and five minutes later the American ship ranged up abeam of the sternmost vessel, at

the distance of a cable's length, passing ahead with her sails lifting, until the three ships formed nearly an equilateral triangle, the Constitution to windward. In this masterly position the action commenced, the three vessels keeping up a hot and unceasing fire for about a quarter of an hour, when that of the enemy sensibly slackened. The sea being covered with an immense cloud of smoke, and it being now moonlight, Capt. Stewart ordered the cannonading to cease. In three minutes the smoke had blown away, when the leading ship of the enemy was seen under the lee-beam of the Constitution, while the sternmost was luffing up, as if she intended to tack and cross her stern. Giving a broadside to the ship abreast of her, the American frigate threw her main and mizzen-top-sails, with top-gallant-sails set, flat back, shook all forward, let fly her jib-sheet, and backed swiftly astern, compelling the enemy to fill again, to avoid being raked. The leading ship now attempted to tack, to cross the Constitution's fore-foot, when the latter filled, boarded her fore-tack, shot ahead, forced her antagonist to ware under a raking broadside, and to run off to leeward to escape from the weight of her fire.

The Constitution, perceiving that the largest ship was waring also, wore in her turn, and crossing her stern, raked her with effect, though the enemy came by the wind immediately, and delivered her larboard broadside, but as the Constitution ranged up close on her weather-quarter, she struck. Mr. Hoffman, the second lieutenant of the Constitution, was immediately sent to take possession, the prize proving to be the British ship Cyane, Capt. Falcon.

In the mean time, the ship that had run to

leeward, had no intention of abandoning her consort, but had been forced out of the combat by the crippled condition of her running rigging, and to avoid the weight of the Constitution's fire. She was ignorant of the fate of the Cyane, but at the end of about an hour, having repaired damages, she hauled up, and met the Constitution coming down in quest of her. It was near nine before the two ships crossed each other on opposite tacks, the Constitution to windward, and exchanged broadsides. The English ship, finding her antagonist too heavy, immediately bore up, in doing which she got a raking broadside, when the Constitution boarded her fore-tack and made sail, keeping up a most effective chasing fire from her two bow guns, nearly every shot of which told. The two ships were so near each other, that the ripping of the enemy's planks was heard on board the Constitution. The former was unable to support this long, and at ten P. M. he came by the wind, fired a gun to leeward, and lowered his ensign. Mr. W. B. Shubrick, the third lieutenant, was sent on board to take possession, when it was found that the prize was the Levant 18, the Hon. Capt. Douglas.

During this cruise the Constitution mounted fifty-two guns; and she had a complement of about four hundred and seventy, all told, a few of which were absent in a prize. The Cyane was a frigate-built ship, that properly rated twenty-four guns, though she appeared as only a twenty in Steele's list, mounting twenty-two thirty-two-pound carronades, on her gun-deck, and ten eighteen-pound carronades, with two chase-guns, on her quarter-deck and forecastle, making thirty-four in all. The Levant was a

new ship, rating eighteen, and mounting eighteen thirty-two-pound carronades, a shifting eighteen on her top-gallant forecastle, and two chase-guns, or twenty-one in all. There were found in the Cyane one hundred and sixty-eight prisoners, of whom twenty-six were wounded. The precise number slain on board her is not known; Captain Stewart, probably judging from an examination of the muster-book, computing it at twelve, while the accounts given by the English publications differ, some putting the killed at only four, and others at six. It was probably between the two estimates. Her regular crew was about one hundred and eighty-five, all told; and there is no reason to believe that it was not nearly, if not absolutely, full. Captain Stewart supposes it to have been one hundred and eighty in the action, which was probably about the truth. The Levant's regular complement is said to have been one hundred and thirty, all told; but it appears by a statement published in Barbadoes, where some of her officers shortly after went, that there were a good many supernumeraries in the two vessels, that were going to the Western Islands, to bring away a ship that was building there. Captain Stewart supposes the Levant to have had one hundred and fifty-six men in the action, of whom he believed twenty-three to have been killed, and sixteen wounded. The first estimate may have been too high, though the truth can probably never be known. It is believed that no English official account of this action has ever been published, but the Barbadoes statement makes the joint loss of the two ships ten killed and twenty-eight wounded; other English accounts

raise it as high as forty-one in all. It may have been a little less than the estimate of Captain Stewart, although his account of the wounded must have been accurate, but was probably considerably more than that of the English statements. The Constitution had three killed and twelve wounded, or she sustained a total loss of fifteen men. By one A. M. of the 21st, she was ready for another action. Although it was more than three hours and a half from the time this combat commenced before the Levant struck, the actual fighting did not occupy three quarters of an hour. For a night action, the execution on both sides was unusual, the enemy firing much better than common. The Constitution was hulled oftener in this engagement than in both her previous battles, though she suffered less in her crew than in the combat with the Java. She had not an officer hurt.

The manner in which Captain Stewart handled his ship on this occasion excited much admiration among nautical men, it being an unusual thing for a single vessel to engage two enemies, and escape being raked. So far from this occurring to the Constitution, however, she actually raked both her opponents, and the manner in which she backed and filled in the smoke, forcing her two antagonists down to leeward, when they were endeavouring to cross her stern or fore-foot, is among the most brilliant manœuvring in naval annals.

It is due to a gallant enemy to say, that Captain Douglas commanded the respect of the Americans by his intrepid perseverance in standing by his consort. Although the attempt might not have succeeded, the time necessarily lost in securing the

Cyane gave him an opportunity to endeavour to escape, that he nobly refused to improve.

Captain Stewart proceeded with his two prizes to Port Praya, where he arrived on the 10th of March. Here a vessel was engaged as a cartel, and more than a hundred of the prisoners were landed, with a view to help to fit her for sea. Saturday, March 11th, 1815, a little after meridian, while a cutter was absent to bring the cartel under the stern of the frigate, Mr. Shubrick, then the first lieutenant of the Constitution,* was walking the quarter-deck, when his attention was attracted by a hurried exclamation from an English midshipman, that a large ship was in the offing. A severe reprimand, in a low tone, from one of the English captains, followed; and, on looking over the quarter, the subject of this little interruption was ascertained. The sea was covered with a heavy fog near the water, and there was a good deal of haze above, but in the latter the sails of a large ship were visible. She was on a wind, looking in-shore, and evidently stretching towards the roads. Examining the stranger, Mr. Shubrick went below and reported the fact to Capt. Stewart. This officer coolly remarked that it was probably an English frigate, or an Indiaman, and directed the lieutenant to return on deck, call all hands, and get ready to go out and attack her. As soon as this order was given, the officer took a new look at the stranger, when he discovered the canvass of two other ships rising above the bank of fog, in the same direction. They were evidently heavy men-of-war, and Capt. Stewart was

* Messrs. Ballard and Hoffman were in the prizes.

immediately apprised of the fresh discovery. That prompt and decided officer did not hesitate an instant concerning the course he ought to take, well knowing that the English would disregard the neutrality of any port that had not force enough to resist them, or which did not belong to a nation they were obliged to respect. He immediately made a signal for the prizes to follow, and ordered the Constitution's cable to be cut. In ten minutes after this order was issued, and in fifteen after the first ship had been seen, the American frigate was standing out of the roads under her three topsails.

The cool and officer-like manner in which sail was made and the ship cast, has been much extolled, not an instant being lost by hurry or confusion. The prizes followed with promptitude. The north-east trades were blowing, and the three vessels passed out to sea about gunshot to windward of the hostile squadron, just clearing East Point. As the Constitution weathered the land, she crossed top-gallant-yards, boarded her tacks, and set all the light sails that would draw. The English prisoners on shore took possession of a battery, and fired at her as she went out. As soon as the American ships had gained the weather-beam of the enemy, the latter tacked, and the six vessels stood off to the southward and eastward, carrying everything that would draw, and going about ten knots.

The fog still lay so thick upon the water as to conceal the hulls of the strangers, but they were supposed to be two line-of-battle ships, and a large frigate, the vessel most astern and to leeward being the commodore. The frigate weathered on all the American ships, gaining on the Levant and

Cyane, but falling astern of the Constitution, while the two larger vessels, on the latter's lee-quarter, held way with her. As soon as clear of the land, the Constitution cut adrift two boats astern, the enemy pressing her too hard to allow of their being hoisted in. The Cyane was gradually dropping astern and to leeward, rendering it certain, if she stood on, that the most weatherly of the enemy's vessels would soon be alongside of her; and, at ten minutes past one, Capt. Stewart made a signal for her to tack. This order was obeyed by Mr. Hoffman, the prize-master; and it was now expected that one of the enemy's ships would go about and follow her, a hope that was disappointed. The Cyane, finding that she was not pursued, stood on until she was lost in the fog, when Mr. Hoffman tacked again, anticipating that the enemy might chase him to leeward. This prudent officer improved his advantage, by keeping to windward long enough to allow the enemy to get ahead, should they pursue him, when he squared away for America, arriving safely at New York on the 10th of April following.

The three ships of the enemy continued to chase the Constitution and Levant. As the vessels left the land the fog lessened, though it still lay so dense on the immediate surface of the ocean, as to leave Capt. Stewart in doubt as to the force of his pursuers. The English officers on board the Constitution affirmed that the vessel that was getting into her wake was the Acasta 40, Capt. Kerr, a twenty-four pounder ship, and it was thought that the three were a squadron that was cruising for the President, Peacock, and Hornet, consisting of the Leander 50, Sir George Collier, Newcastle

50, Lord George Stuart, and the Acasta, the ships that they subsequently proved to be. The Newcastle was the vessel on the lee-quarter of the Constitution, and by half-past two the fog had got so low, that her officers were seen standing on the hammock-cloths, though the line of her ports was not visible. She now began to fire by divisions, and some opinion could be formed of her armament by the flashes of her guns through the fog. Her shot struck the water within a hundred yards of the American ship, but did not rise again. By three P. M. the Levant had fallen so far astern, that she was in the very danger from which the Cyane had so lately been extricated, and Capt. Stewart made her signal to tack also. Mr. Ballard immediately complied, and seven minutes later the three English ships tacked by signal, and chased the prize, leaving the Constitution steering in a different direction, at the rate of eleven knots.

Mr. Ballard, finding the enemy bent on following the Levant, the Acasta being to windward of her wake, ran back into Port Praya, and anchored, at four o'clock, within one hundred and fifty yards of the shore, under a strong battery. The enemy's ships had commenced firing, as soon as it was seen that the Levant would gain the anchorage, and all three now opened on the prize. After bearing the fire for a considerable time, her colours were hauled down. No one one was hurt in the Levant, Mr. Ballard causing his men to lie on the deck as soon as the ship was anchored. The English prisoners in the battery also fired at the Levant.

Sir George Collier was much criticised for the

course he pursued on this occasion. It was certainly a mistake to call off more than one ship to chase the Levant, though the position of the Leander in the fog, so far to leeward and astern, did not give the senior officer the best opportunities for observing the course of events. There was certainly every prospect of the Acasta's bringing the Constitution to action in the course of the night, though the other vessels might have been left so far astern as still to render the result doubtful.

Whatever may be thought of the management of the enemy, there can be but one opinion of that of Captain Stewart. The promptitude with which he decided on his course, the judgment with which he ordered the prizes to vary their courses, and the steadiness with which the Constitution was commanded, aided in elevating a professional reputation that was already very high.

This terminated the exploits of the gallant Constitution, or Old Ironsides, as she was affectionately called in the navy—Captain Stewart, after landing his prisoners at Maranham, and learning at Porto Rico that peace had been made, carrying her into New York, about the middle of May. In the course of two years and nine months, this ship had been in three actions, had been twice critically chased, and had captured five vessels of war, two of which were frigates, and a third frigate-built. In all her service, as well before Tripoli as in this war, her good fortune was remarkable. She never was dismasted, never got ashore, nor scarcely ever suffered any of the usual accidents of the sea. Though so often in battle,

no very serious slaughter ever took place on board her. One of her commanders was wounded, and four of her lieutenants had been killed, two on her own decks, and two in the Intrepid; but, on the whole, her entire career had been that of what is usually called a "lucky ship." Her fortune, however, may perhaps be explained in the simple fact, that she had always been well commanded. In her two last cruises she had probably possessed as fine a crew as ever manned a frigate. They were principally New England men, and it has been said of them, that they were almost qualified to fight the ship without her officers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Com. Decatur's squadron—The President chased—President and Endymion—Capture of the President—The Hornet and Penguin—The Hornet chased—Escape of the Hornet—Purchase of new vessels—American achievements.

When Com. Rodgers left the President, in the summer of 1814, to take command of the Guerriere, Com. Decatur was transferred to that ship, the United States and Macedonian, then blockaded in the Thames, having been laid up, and the Hornet, Captain Biddle, left to protect them. This service was particularly irksome to an officer of the spirit of the last-named gentleman, and persevering in his application to be released from it, he finally received an order to join Com. Decatur at New York, where the President had been some time detained to make part of the defence of the port, while the enemy was committing his depredations on the coast, during the mild weather. No sooner did Captain Biddle receive this welcome command, than he took the first favourable occasion to pass out, leaving the blockading squadron to the eastward, and ran down to New York. This was in

the month of November, 1814, and Com. Decatur had now a force consisting of the President 44, his own ship, Peacock 18, Captain Warrington, Hornet 18, Captain Biddle, and Tom Bowline store-vessel. His destination was the East Indies, where it was thought great havoc might be made among the valuable trade of the English.

Owing to different causes, but principally to the wish of the government to keep a force at New York to resist the depredations of the enemy, Com. Decatur did not get to sea until the middle of January 1815. The President dropped down to Sandy Hook alone, leaving the other vessels lying at Staten Island, and on the night of the 14th she made an attempt to cross the bar. In consequence of the darkness, the pilots missed the channel, and the ships struck, beating heavily on the sands for an hour and a half. About ten o'clock the tide had risen to its height, and she was forced into deep water. Although the vessel had received considerable injury, it was impossible to return, and a strong blockading force being in the offing, it became necessary to carry sail to get off the coast before morning. It had blown a gale the previous day, and Com. Decatur, rightly judging that the enemy had been driven to leeward, decided to run along the land to the northward and eastward, as the best means of avoiding a greatly superior force. This determination was judicious, and, had not the detention occurred on the bar, it would have been completely successful. After running off in a north-eastern direction for about five hours, the course of the ship was altered to S.E. by E. Two hours later, a strange sail was discovered ahead, and within gunshot, and two others being soon after seen, the Presi-

dent hauled up and passed to the northward of them all. At daylight, four ships were seen in chase, one on each quarter, and two astern. The nearest vessel was believed to be the Majestic rasée, which fired a broadside or two, in the hope of crippling the American frigate, but without effect. It is now known that the enemy had been driven down by the gale, and that he was just returning to his station, when this unlucky encounter occurred.

The chase continued throughout the forenoon, the wind becoming lighter and baffling. The rasée was dropped materially, but the next nearest ship, the Endymion 40, a twenty-four pounder frigate, had closed, and as the President was very deep, being filled with stores for a long cruise, Com. Decatur commenced lightening her. Unfortunately, the commander, all the lieutenants, and the master, were strangers, in one sense, to the ship, most of them never having been at sea in her at all, and neither in any responsible situation. The duty of lightening a ship in chase is one of the most delicate operations in seamanship, and it ought never to be attempted except by those perfectly acquainted with her lines, trim, and stowage. Half a dozen more water casks emptied at one end of the vessel than at the other may injure her sailing, and the utmost care is to be observed, lest the indiscretion of inferiors in the hold defeat the calculations of the commander on deck. On the other hand, Com. Decatur decided to undertake this delicate operation under the most favourable circumstances that a want of familiarity with his ship would allow, as the wind was getting to be light, and was nearly aft.

It is not known, however, that the sailing of the

President was not at all injured by the process of lightening, for the enemy obtained a material advantage by a change in the wind. While it was still light with the American ship, the British, about three P. M., were bringing down with them a fresh breeze. Soon after, the Endymion, the nearest vessel, having got within reach of shot, opened with her bow guns, the President returning the fire with her stern chasers. The object of each was to cripple the spars of the other. It is said that on this occasion the shot of the American were observed to be thrown with a momentum so unusually small, as to have since excited much distrust of the quality of her powder. It is even added, that many of these shot were distinctly seen, when clear of the smoke, until they struck.

By five P. M. the Endymion had got so far on the starboard or lee-quarter of the President, that no gun of the latter would bear on her, without altering the course. The fire of the English ship now became exceedingly annoying, for she was materially within point blank range, and every shot cut away something aloft. Still it was borne, in the hope that she would range up alongside, and give the President an opportunity to lay her aboard. Finding, however, that the enemy warily kept his position by yawing, in the hope of gradually crippling the American ship, Com. Decatur decided on a course that singularly partook of the daring chivalry of his character.

It was evident that the sailing of the President was much impaired, either by injuries received on the bar, or by the manner in which she had been lightened, and escape by flight had become nearly hopeless. Com. Decatur, therefore, determined to make an effort to exchange ships, by carrying the Endymion,

hand to hand, and to go off in the prize, abandoning his own vessel to the enemy. With this object in view, he determined to keep away, lay the enemy aboard, if possible, and put everything on the success of the experiment. The plan was communicated to the people, who received it cheerfully, and just at dusk the helm of the President was put up, bringing the wind over the taffrail, the ship heading south. But she was so closely watched, that the Endymion kept away at the same moment, and the two ships soon came abeam of each other, when both delivered their broadsides. The President's attempts to close, however, were defeated, for the vessels were about a quarter of a mile apart, and as she hauled nearer to the enemy, the latter sheered away from her. Without a superiority in sailing, it was impossible for Com. Decatur to get on board his enemy while the latter chose to avoid him, and he was now reduced to the necessity of attempting to get rid of the Endymion by dismantling her. The two frigates, consequently, continued running off dead before the wind, keeping up a heavy cannonade for two hours and a half, when the Endymion was so far injured that she fell astern, most of her sails having been cut from the yards. The President, at this moment, was under her royal studding sails, and there is no doubt, by choosing her position, she might easily have compelled her adversary to strike; but by this time, though the night was dark, the vessels astern were in sight, and she was obliged to resume her original course to avoid them. In doing this, the President hauled up under the broadside of her late antagonist, without receiving any fire to injure her.

It was now half-past eight, and the President con-

tinued to run off south-east, repairing damages, but it was found impossible to prevent the other vessels of the enemy from closing. At eleven P. M. the Pomone 38 got on the weather bow of the American ship, and poured in a broadside; and as the Tenedos, of the same force, was fast closing on the quarter, and the Majestic was within gun-shot astern, further resistance was useless. Com. Decatur had ordered his people below when he saw the two last frigates closing, but finding that his signal of submission was not at first understood, the Pomone continuing to fire, an order was given for them to return to their guns, when the enemy ceased. The Majestic coming up before the removal of Com. Decatur, that officer delivered his sword to her captain, who was the senior English officer present.

In this long and close cannonade, agreeably to the official reports, the President lost twenty-four men killed, and fifty-six wounded. She was a good deal injured in her hull, and most of her important spars were badly damaged. By one of those chances which decide the fortunes of men, among the slain were the first, fourth, and fifth lieutenants.*

* Messrs. Babbitt, Hamilton, and Howell. Mr. Fitz-Henry Babbitt was a native of Massachusetts, and a good, although an unfortunate officer; this being the second time in which, as a first lieutenant, he had been captured during this war, when a few hours out of New York. He was standing on the coamings of the after-hatch, working the ship, Com. Decatur being seated on the hammock-cloths, giving directions, when the Endymion's first broadside was received. A twenty-four-pound shot struck Mr. Babbitt on the knee, and he fell down the hatch, fracturing his skull by the fall. He died in half an hour. An order was sent below for Mr. John Templar Shubrick, the second lieutenant, to come on deck and take the trumpet. As this gentleman passed aft on the gun-deck, he asked Mr. Hamilton, who commanded the after-guns, and who was his townsman, how he was getting on.

The Endymion had eleven killed, and fourteen wounded, according to the published reports. As it is known that an order was given to aim at the rigging and spars of this ship, with a view to cripple her, which was effectually done, it is probable that this statement was accurate. It is believed, however, on respectable authority, that a great many shot hulled the Endymion, which did not penetrate; a fact which, coupled with other observations made during the day, has induced a distrust of the quality of the President's powder. Owing to one, or to both, the circumstances named, the English ship lost but about a third as many men as the American, though a considerable number of the President's people were killed and wounded by the unresisted fire of the Pomone, having been ordered back to the guns before the latter ceased.

The President was carried to Bermuda, and both she and the Endymion were dismasted in a gale, before reaching port. The latter also threw overboard her upper-deck guns. Com. Decatur was shortly after paroled, and he and all his surviving officers and men were subsequently acquitted, with honour, for the loss of the ship. An unhandsome attempt was at first made, on the part of some of the English publications, to raise an impression that the President had been captured by the Endymion, but the facts were too notorious to allow it to succeed. Nothing would have been easier than for the President

While in the act of making a cheerful reply, the latter was nearly cut in two by a heavy shot. Mr. Hamilton was from South Carolina, and a son of a former Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Howell, a son of the late Governor Howell of New Jersey, was killed on the quarter-deck by a spent grape-shot, which fractured his skull.

to have chosen her position, when she left the Endymion, and probably to have captured her without any material additional loss to herself, since a ship virtually without canvass would evidently have been at the mercy of one that went out of action with royal studding-sails set. The difference in loss between the two ships is easily explained. The first two or three broadsides are usually the destructive broadsides. The President suffered more in the first half hour she was engaged with the Endymion, than in the succeeding two hours; and this was the time when her own fire was directed at her antagonist's spars. The fact that the Endymion did not join the other ships until three or four hours after the President struck, when, if able to have done so, there was every motive for her to have acted otherwise, is perfectly conclusive as to the condition of the two vessels, so far as the power of motion was concerned. Having the power of motion, by bringing a fresh broadside to bear on the Endymion, her capture would have been made certain, a well-conditioned frigate seldom lying near an adversary, without making a serious impression on her hull, when the latter is not able to return her fire.*

The commanders of the Peacock, Hornet, and Tom Bowline brig, ignorant of the capture of the President, followed her to sea, about the 22d, taking advantage of a strong northwester to pass the bar by daylight. The enemy were seen lying-to at the southward and eastward, but was disregarded. A few days out, the Hornet parted company in chase of a neutral, when all three vessels made the best of their way to the

* The Macedonian, a merchant brig, that sailed in company with the President, easily escaped.

island of Tristan d'Acunha, the place of rendezvous appointed by Com. Decatur. The Peacock and Tom Bowline arrived about the middle of March, but bad weather coming on, they were driven off the land. On the morning of the 23d of the same month, the Hornet came in, with the wind fresh at S.S.W., and was about to anchor, having let go her topsail sheets to clew up, when the men aloft discovered a sail to windward. The stranger was standing to the westward, and was soon shut in by the land. Captain Biddle immediately sheeted home his topsails again, and made a stretch to windward, and towards the chase, which was shortly after seen running down before the wind. There being little doubt as to the character of the stranger, the Hornet hove-to, in waiting for him to come down, and when he had got near enough to render it prudent, the main-topsail was filled, and the ship was kept yawing, occasionally waring, both to allow him to close and to prevent his giving a raking fire.

At 1. 40 P. M., the stranger, having got within musket shot, came to the wind, set English colours, and fired a gun. On this challenge, the Hornet luffed up, showed her ensign, and returned a broadside. For fifteen minutes both vessels kept up a sharp cannonade, that of the American ship, in particular, being very animated, when the latter, finding it impossible to stand the Hornet's fire, put his helm up and ran down directly on the starboard broadside of the latter, to lay her aboard. The enemy's bowsprit came in between the main and mizzen rigging of the Hornet, affording a perfectly good opportunity to attempt effecting his purpose; but though his first lieutenant made a gallant effort to lead on his men, the latter

could not be induced to follow. Captain Biddle had called away boarders to repel boarders, and they now manifested a strong wish to go into the English vessel, but perceiving his great advantage at the guns, that intrepid officer, who had been so free to adopt this expedient, when it was his duty to lead in his own person, judiciously refused his permission.

The vessels lay in this position but a minute or two, the American raking, when the sea lifted the Hornet ahead, carrying away her mizzen-rigging, davits and spanker boom, the enemy swinging round and hanging on the larboard quarter. At this moment Captain Biddle sent the master forward to set the foresail, with a view to part the vessels, when an officer on board the English ship called out that she surrendered. The positions prevented any other firing than that of small arms; this was ordered to cease, and Captain Biddle sprang upon the taffrail to inquire if the enemy submitted. He was within thirty feet of the forecastle of the English vessel, when two marines on board her discharged their muskets at him. The ball of one just missed the chin, and, passing through the skin of the neck, inflicted a severe, but fortunately not a dangerous wound. This incident drew a discharge of muskets from the Hornet, which killed the two marines; the American ship drew ahead at that instant, and the enemy lost his bowsprit and foremast as the vessels separated.

The Hornet now wore round, with a fresh broadside to bear, and was about to throw in a raking fire, when twenty men appeared at the side and on the forecastle of the enemy, raising their hands for quarter, and eagerly calling out that they had struck. The excitement on board the American ship, however,

was so great, in consequence of the manner in which their gallant captain had received his wound, that it was with the utmost difficulty Captain Biddle and his officers could prevent the people from pouring in another broadside.*

The prize was his Britannic Majesty's brig the Penguin 18, mounting nineteen carriage guns; viz. sixteen thirty-two pound carronades, two chase-guns, and a shifting carronade on the top-gallant forecastle. She was a vessel of the Hornet's class, size, and metal, and is represented as having had a spare port forward, by means of which she could fight ten guns in broadside.† Her complement of men was one hundred and thirty-two, of whom twelve had been put on board her for the express purpose of engaging a very heavy American privateer called the Young Wasp, a fact that is known by a letter found in her, from the Admiral at the Cape of Good Hope, to which station the Penguin belonged. Captain Biddle stated the loss of his prize at fourteen killed and twenty-eight wounded. As respects the latter, there could be no mistake, though it was the opinion of the officer in charge of the prize that more men had been slain. Some time previously to this capture, the enemy had ceased to publish the official accounts of his nautical defeats; but a letter, purporting to be the one written on this occasion, has found its way before the world, in which

* Though this feeling was natural, the wound of Captain Biddle was probably the result of one of those accidental occurrences which are inevitable in the confusion of a combat.

† On an accurate computation of the real (not nominal) metal of the two vessels, the Hornet would appear to have thrown about nine pounds more shot in weight at a broadside than the Penguin, the latter not using her spare port. As respects the crew, the American ship had some ten or fifteen the most men at quarters. In tonnage the vessels were very nearly equal.

the English loss is stated at only ten killed and twenty-eight wounded. The Penguin was completely riddled with the Hornet's shot, lost her foremast and bowsprit, and her mainmast was too much injured to be secured. Among her slain were her commander, Captain Dickenson, and the boatswain; and among the wounded a lieutenant, two midshipmen, and the purser.

The Hornet had but one man killed and ten wounded. Among the latter, in addition to Captain Biddle, was the first lieutenant, Mr. Conner,* a young officer of high promise, whose life was considered in great danger for some time. Not a round shot touched the Hornet's hull, nor did her spars receive any material injury, though she was a good deal cut up in her rigging and sails.

The combat between the Hornet and the Penguin was one of the most creditable to the character of the American marine that occurred in the course of the war. The vessels were very fairly matched, and when it is remembered that an English flag-officer had sent the Penguin on especial service against a ship believed to be materially heavier than the vessel she actually encountered, it is fair to presume she was thought to be, in every respect, in her own service, an efficient cruiser. Yet, with the advantage of the wind, this ship was taken in twenty-two minutes, including the time lost while she hung on the Hornet's quarter, and while the latter was waring. The neatness and despatch with which the American sloop did her work, the coolness with which she met the attempt to board, and the accuracy of her fire and handling, are all proofs of her having been a disci-

* Now Captain Conner.

plined man-of-war, and of the high condition of that service in which she was one of the favourites. It is by such exploits that the character of a marine is most effectually proved.

A few hours after the action, a strange and suspiciously looking sail heaving in sight, a cable was taken from the Penguin, and the Hornet towed her some distance off the land. After thoroughly examining the prize, and getting out of her all the stores and provisions that were wanted, before daylight, on the morning of the 25th, Captain Biddle scuttled her, The Hornet then stood in towards the island to look for the strange sail, which was found to be the Peacock, having the Tom Bowline in company. An arrangement was now made, by which the latter was converted into a cartel, and was sent into Rio de Janeiro with the prisoners.

As soon as he was released from this encumbrance, and from the great drain on his supplies, Captain Biddle was ready to continue his cruise. This spirited officer did not consider the capture of a vessel of the same class as his own a reason of itself for returning to port; but it having been ascertained, by means of the Macedonian, a brig which sailed with the President, that the latter ship was probably captured, Captain Warrington determined to proceed on the original cruise, with the remaining vessels. They sailed, accordingly, on the 13th of April, having remained at the island the time directed in the instructions of Com. Decatur.

While making the best of their way towards the Indian Seas, on the morning of the 27th of April, the two ships then being in lat. 38° 30′ S., long. 33° E., the Peacock made the signal of a stranger to the

southward and eastward. But the sloops of war made sail in chase. Though the wind was light, before evening it was found that the stranger was materially nearer. It now fell calm, and the chase was in sight in the morning. The wind coming out at N. W., the ships ran down before it, with studding sails on both sides, the stranger hauling up, apparently, to look at them. The Peacock was the fastest vessel, and being two leagues ahead at half past two P. M., she was observed to manifest some caution about approaching the stranger, when the Hornet took in her starboard light sails, and hauled up for her consort. It was now thought, on board the latter ship, that the stranger was a large Indiaman, and that the Peacock was merely waiting for the Hornet to come up, in order to attack her. But an hour later Captain Warrington made a signal that the vessel in sight was a line-of-battle ship, and an enemy. The Hornet immediately hauled close upon the wind, the stranger then on her lee-quarter, distant not quite two leagues, the Peacock passing ahead and soon getting clear of him.

It was now seen that the English ship sailed very fast, and was unusually weatherly. The Hornet being more particularly in danger, about nine P. M. Captain Biddle felt it necessary to begin to lighten, his vessel being crowded with stores from the Penguin. Twelve tons of kentledge, a quantity of shot, some heavy spars, and the sheet anchor and cable, were thrown overboard. By two A. M. the enemy had drawn forward of the lee-beam, when the Hornet tacked to the westward, the enemy immediately following. At daylight on the 29th, the English ship was on the lee-quarter of the American, and within

gunshot. At seven o'clock he had English colours flying, with a rear admiral's flag aboard, and he commenced firing. The shot passing over the Hornet, the launch was cut up and gotten rid of, the other anchors and cables, more shot, as many heavy articles as could be come at, and six of the guns, were also thrown overboard. By nine o'clock the enemy had dropped so far astern that he ceased firing, the concussion produced by his guns having deadened the wind.

By eleven A. M., however, it was found that the enemy was again closing, when the Hornet threw overboard all the remaining guns but one, the boats, most of her shot, all the spare spars, as many other things from off the deck and from below, as could be got at. She also cut up her top-gallant forecastle, and threw the pieces into the ocean. At meridian, the enemy had got within a mile, and he began again to fire, his shot flying far beyond the ship. Fortunately but three struck her. One passed through her jib, another plunged on her deck, glancing and lodging forward, and a third also hulled her. Still Captain Biddle held on, determined not to give up his ship while there was a ray of hope, for it was seen that the enemy dropped astern while firing. About two P. M. the breeze freshened, and got more to the westward. Previously to this, the wind, by backing to the south-east, had greatly favoured the chase, but it now brought the Hornet more to windward, and she began to get brisk way on her. At sunset the stranger was more than a league astern, and the ship was running nine knots throughout the night, it blowing in squalls. The enemy was seen at intervals, carrying sail in chase, but at daylight he was nearly hull

down astern. At half-past nine A. M. he took in his studding sails, reefed in his topsails, and hauled off to the eastward, and two hours later his upper sails had dipped. The Hornet had now no anchor, cable, or boat, and but one gun, and she made the best of her way to New York, where she arrived on the 9th of June.

Captain Biddle gained nearly as much reputation for the steadiness and skill with which he saved his ship on this occasion, as for the fine manner in which he had fought her a few weeks earlier. In the promptitude with which he had continued his cruise after capturing a vessel of equal force, the nation traced the spirit of the elder officer, of the same name and family, who had rendered himself so conspicuous in the Revolution. He had been promoted to the rank of captain, though it was unknown to him, before he took the Penguin, but he received the other marks of approbation usual on such occasions. His conduct in the chase will be better appreciated when it is added, that his ship was as near the enemy as the United States got to the Macedonian, until the latter was fairly crippled. The vessel that chased the Hornet was the Cornwallis 74, bearing the flag of an officer proceeding to the East Indies.

The Peacock continued her cruise, and on the 30th of June, in the Straits of Sunda, she fell in with the East India Company's cruiser, Nautilus 14, Captain Boyce, and, in consequence of Captain Warrington's having no knowledge of the peace, broadsides were exchanged, when the Nautilus struck. This unfortunate mistake occurred a few days after the period set for the termination of hostilities, and on ascertaining that a treaty of peace had been ratified in

March, Captain Warrington gave up the Nautilus the next day. The latter vessel had six killed, and eight wounded, but no person was hurt on board the Peacock, which ship immediately returned home.

The combat between the Hornet and Penguin was the last regular action of the war, and the rencontre between the Nautilus the last instance of hostilities between the belligerents. When the Peacock got in, every cruiser that had been out against the English had returned to port.

The burning of the frigate Columbia at Washington, and the blockade of the Java in the Chesapeake, had induced the government, in the autumn of 1814, to purchase or build two squadrons of small vessels, one of which was to be commanded by Captain Porter, and the other by Captain Perry. The former succeeded in buying five brigantines, or schooners, and he was about to sail with them when news of peace reached the country. The vessels which formed one of these flying squadrons, were the Firefly, Captain Porter; Spark, Lieutenant Com. Gamble; Torch, Lieutenant Com. Chauncey; Spitfire, Captain Cassin,* and Flambeau, Lieutenant Com. J. B. Nicolson. The first destination of this force was the West Indies, and it was understood that it was to sail with orders to burn, sink, and destroy, without attempting to get anything in, except in very extraordinary cases.

Captain Perry was less successful in finding suitable vessels; and three stout brigs, called the Boxer, Saranac, and Chippewa, were laid down, though built with green timber. Another, called the Escape, was

* This officer had been promoted for his gallantry in the battle of Plattsburg Bay.

purchased, and named the Prometheus; but it would seem that a fifth vessel had not been found when peace was proclaimed. The Boxer was given to Lieutenant John Porter, the Chippewa to Lieutenant G. Campbell Read, the Saranac to Lieutenant Elton, and the Prometheus to Lieutenant Joseph J. Nicholson. The fifth vessel would have been Captain Perry's, but that officer returned to the Java, as soon as it was known that the Flying Squadron would not be used as originally intended.

Thus terminated the war of 1812, so far as it was connected with the American marine. The navy came out of this struggle with a vast increase of reputation. The brilliant style in which the ships had been carried into action, and the steadiness and rapidity with which they had been handled, and the fatal accuracy of their fire, on nearly every occasion, produced a new era in naval warfare. Most of the frigate actions had been as soon decided as circumstances would at all allow, and in no instance was it found necessary to keep up the fire of a sloop of war an hour, when singly engaged. Most of the combats of the latter, indeed, were decided in half that time. The execution done in these short conflicts was often equal to that made by the largest vessels of Europe in general actions, and in some of them the slain and wounded comprised a very large proportion of the crews.

It is not easy to say in which nation this unlooked for result created the most surprise—America or England. In the first it produced a confidence in itself that had been greatly wanted, but which, in the end, perhaps, degenerated to a feeling of self-esteem

and security that were not without danger, or entirely without exaggeration. The last was induced to alter its mode of rating, adopting one by no means as free from the imputation of a want of consistency as the one it abandoned, and it altogether changed its estimate of the force of single ships, as well as of the armaments of frigates. The ablest and bravest captains of the English fleet were ready to admit that a new power was about to appear on the ocean, and that it was not improbable the battle for the mastery of the seas would have to be fought over again. In short, while some of its ignorant, presuming, and boastful were disposed to find excuses for the unexpected nautical reverses which Great Britain had met with in this short war, the sagacious and reflecting saw in them matter for serious apprehension and alarm. They knew that the former triumphs of their admirals had not so much grown out of an unusual ability to manœuvre fleets, as in the national aptitude to manage single ships, and they saw the proofs of the same aptitude, in the conduct of the Americans during this struggle, improved on by a skill in gunnery, that had never before been so uniformly manifested in naval warfare. In a word, it may be questioned if all the great victories of the last European wars caused more exultation among the uninstructed of that nation, than the defeats of this gave rise to misgivings and apprehensions among those who were able to appreciate causes and to anticipate consequences in matters so purely professional as the construction, powers, and handling of ships. Many false modes of accounting for the novel character that had been given to naval battles was resorted to, and among other reasons it was affirmed that the

American vessels of war sailed with crews of picked seamen. That a nation which practised impressment should imagine that another in which enlistments were voluntary could possess an advantage of this nature, infers a strong disposition to listen to any means but the right one to account for an unpleasant truth. It is not known that a single vessel left the country, the case of the Constitution on her two last cruises excepted, with a crew that could be deemed extraordinary in this respect. No American man-of-war ever sailed with a complement composed of nothing but able seamen; and some of the hardest fought battles that occurred during this war were fought by ships' companies that were materially worse than common. The people which manned the vessels on Lake Champlain, in particular, were of a quality much inferior to those usually found in ships of war. Neither were the officers, in general, old or very experienced. The navy itself dated but fourteen years back, when the war commenced; and some of the commanders began their professional career several years after the first appointments had been made. Perhaps one half of the lieutenants in the service at the peace of 1815 had first gone on board ship within six years from the declaration of the war, and very many of them within three or four. So far from the midshipmen having been masters and mates of merchantmen, as was reported at the time, they were generally youths that first went from the ease and comforts of the paternal home, when they appeared on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war.

That the tone and discipline of the service were high, is true; but it must be ascribed to moral, and

not to physical causes; to that aptitude in the American character for the sea, which has been so constantly manifested from the day the first pinnace sailed along the coast on the trading voyages of the seventeenth century, down to the present moment.

THE END.

LONDON:
BOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY-STREET, STRAND.

NOTE.

Since printing, it has been ascertained that Mr. Porter did not join the Philadelphia until after she had taken the Meshboha, Mr. Cox having been the first lieutenant at the time. The American prize was the Celia, and not the Celica; and she, too, was carried into Gibraltar before she was released.

To "ware" is a corruption of "to veer," and there is ancient authority for the spelling adopted; to "wear" being an unmeaning term.

"Pennant" is believed to be derived from "pennon;" "pendant" meaning a very different thing.

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Government of Maharashtra
on 06 February, 2016